THE MARNERS

AN AMERICAN STORY OF TO-DAY

BY

GERTRUDE POTTER DANIELS

The Warners

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OF TODAY

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To Bert
Donald and Budd

THE THREE
WHOSE FAITH IN ME
IS UNLIMITED

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CHAPTER I.

AT fifteen minutes past six o'clock in the evening Cyrus arrived home from the factory; at seven to the minute he sat down to a solitary supper of his own cooking. His menu was not large or varied, but it was substantial and it sufficed. For years this meal had taken place at the same hour; in fact, it marked the beginning of his independence—an independence whose progress was slow but was yet progress. He never ate without remembering the past and how he had worked up. His satisfaction over his "working up" was supreme; for his boyhood had been very dubious.

Until Cyrus had moved into a room that he called his own his appetite had not been catered to fully or regularly; sometimes his food was doled out to him at back doors; sometimes he picked bits out of garbage boxes; oftener he went hungry. The sensation of emptiness in early years was so common that consciousness of it had ceased to

annoy him—it was part of existence to be hungry. Likewise he had gone without the gratefulness of all personal comforts; all relaxations, and enjoyments. A home, the warmth of a fire, the sense of satiety in any form he had never known. His clothes were either too large, or too small. Nothing ever matched. There were too few garments in the winter; in summer he wore what he had because they were his all—a mass of filthy rags and patches clinging to his little body. When he slept it was in some odd corner not too far away and always well hidden from the sight of prying eyes. Here, twisted into a cramped and uncomfortable position on the bare stones, Cyrus would fall into an immediate and profound slumber overcome with exhaustion; lying inert hour after hour, forgetting in this brief oblivion the gnawings, the pains, the wearinesses of the days. Up again before the sun had fairly a chance to show its face, the boy would rise yawning and rubbing the sleep from his eyes, then stretching his stiff little legs, was off to the office for his papers, alert with the persistence of youth.

Through the long days of varying heat

and cold he cried himself hoarse with headline horrors. When he was not selling papers he blacked boots and with the indomitable will of one who has a fortune to seek, the boy managed to make a living. Even more, for, child of the street as he was, Cyrus, by degrees, became possessed of very definite notions of life; also of two distinct and colossal ambitions.

It would be difficult to trace the instincts that gave this boy his desire for riches and an education; but the desire was there as ungovernable as the winds that blow. No manner of hard luck could bend or break his insistence concerning these ambitions. He was blind to all the difficulties that assailed him. He felt no inadequacies. He set his mind and hardened his will, and redoubled his strength to meet his purpose, seeing in each day a nearer completion of his tremendous ideas.

These ambitions may have been inborn from the father whom he had never seen, or the mother he had never known—the one good thing they had left this boy of theirs for inheritance; the only kindness they had ever

shown him. And with the mysterious knitting together of the lines of fate, they became the fine fabric around which the rest of his character wove its pattern of good and evil.

Naturally he had not the time to go regularly to a place of learning, but for all that bit by bit Warner did master the first rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic. It was a fierce struggle; literally a hand-to-hand wrestle with every word, every line, every figure. But again that was life and he was in no way cowed.

These notions of his as to right and wrong Cyrus mapped into shape according to observance of his own making. His rules were simple and concise. But each rule had its reason and through them Cyrus adjusted himself to conditions. He never permitted himself to lose his temper, because he had never seen violence displayed to a man's advantage. He never fought, his private belief being that educated men dreamed instead of pummeled. Liquor was left untouched because it cost money.

Tossed hither and thither through the mael-

strom of a city, these notions were not always easy of practice. It was only by first proving his prowess that he was given liberty. He had to fight to keep from fighting.

It was a curious thing that half-starved as he was and deprived of everything necessary to make bone, sinew and flesh, Cyrus yet continued to flourish. He shot up tremendously, as though the life agreed with him.

At sixteen he stood six feet in his stockings, and looked taller because of the extreme leanness of his body. His face would have been homely but for its expression of gentleness. His forehead was straight and high, the eyes large and brilliant. His mouth, too, was large, but determined. In fact, it was this feature that gave character to the boy's whole countenance. His hands and feet were enormous, his strength prodigious —a dangerous strength had his nature been belligerent, a force with his ideas of self-government. Cyrus' mind kept pace with his body. He was slow, ponderous, docile and very just.

It was when he had reached his eighteenth

birthday, as near as he could count, that he was taken on at the factory. He left the uncertainties of the street to become one of the "hands," and it seemed that his chance had come at last. That one move marked the period of many important changes. First and foremost he took possession of HIS ROOM. Once there he shut the door firmly in the face of haunting poverty.

This room served as an entire apartment to Cyrus. It was on the top floor of a tenement; a tiny box of an affair, with two dormer windows under the eaves, and a ceiling that half the way across would not permit the man to stand erect in his full height. At five o'clock every morning he awakened to the preliminary work of the day. He lighted his oil stove, filled the kettle and started the water to boiling. While this was in progress he threw the bedclothes back over a chair with one of the dormer windows wide open for air. He thumped his pillows and his mattress vigorously, replaced the clothes carefully, then took his cleaning cloth and pail out from under the bed. Warner never wiped up with a dry duster, but sopped and

pottered, continually wringing the rag out in the water until everything steamed and reeked with dampness. Then he gave himself to the cooking of his breakfast. Sometimes an egg or a piece of salt pork, with a boiled potato; generally a pot of coffee and a crusty roll bought the night before at the bakery around the corner.

After he had eaten he washed the dishes, flinging all the dirty water out of the window into the back lot.

Breakfast over, Cyrus betook himself to the factory where he worked all day, thinking over the conveniences and the comforts of his room, and wondering if he could ever hope for anything much better. Not that there was much better to have, for as it was everything lay at his finger tips. He lacked nothing. His furniture was great; there was a bureau with two drawers, and a place on top for a wash bowl and pitcher. There was a cot bed, the first bed that he had ever slept on; a wonderful thing, long enough to hold him any way he lay; a marvel of softness and warmth, where he dreamed in the stupefaction of enjoyment. Two stiff-backed and

rickety chairs, rigid and military, stood side by side against the wall. These chairs were continually getting in the way. Yet Cyrus cherished them. He could never have entertained without them. For decoration Warner had secured three remarkable calendars and two chromos. The chromos were companion pieces. One represented a brilliant sunset over a green, darkening landscape; the other was a scene at dawn with woods and birds and in the distance a glimpse of purple water. But what appealed to Cyrus closest was his library. These volumes were arranged in a swinging shelf over his bed, where his eyes could rest on them at night and open upon them, directly in the morning. He regarded them with a tenderness that was pathetic; in fact, their possession seemed unreal, somehow representing a link between his desire for knowledge and the knowledge itself, and they never lost their hold on him. The sight of them dispelled the illusion of failures and disappointments and brought an actual completion of education within possibility.

But the satisfaction of a home and posses-

sions did not make Cyrus extravagant, or forgetful of his ambitions; on the contrary, he became miserly. He starved himself as closely as he could and still preserve strength enough to continue with his work. He suffered considerably from the cold; he practiced every small economy he could think of, and pinched and saved and went without. The results of this penuriousness were self-evident. At twenty he opened a bank account; the deposit he made was not a large beginning; still it was a beginning. In fact, that twentieth year of his was one remarkable with many surprises. He began geography at home; at the factory he received a raise in position and an increase in salary; also, he met HER.

She was a very little thing, very pretty and a stenographer. How she could read, and write, and spell! It was a fascinating sight, and it won Cyrus; at least, at first. Afterwards he loved her because he could not help it. The fellow had never seen just such a woman as Betty Martin. It happened the morning he was called into the General Manager's office to receive his raise. There she

sat, taking down a letter that the Manager was dictating as fast as the words would fall from his lips. But nothing phased her; she wrote on and on.

While Cyrus waited for the Manager's attention he watched her. Her hair was a mass of curls coming out all about her face, and piled up in a heap in the back; when the sun fell strongly on it there was a glint of red like a miniature reflection of the orb itself. Her eyes were large and dark; her skin was white, transparent and with tiny threads of veins showing plainly.

"Too white," was Cyrus' mental comment; "I'll give her a rest and the country——"

The thought brought a quick flush to his own face. Before it died away the Manager turned, and the revery ceased. But it was at that first glance that Cyrus decided the future of both himself and Betty.

When one is poor the monotony of existence passes unnoticed. It takes riches to create ennui. But it must be confessed that after that meeting with Betty Martin, life assumed proportions that had never before entered into Cyrus' mind. It was the first time

he had ever been in love, but the woman at last had entangled herself in the man's line of fate, and there altered destiny. He began promptly to starve himself more severely. Warner's constitution was something he prided himself on; his ability to endure pain was immense; so he imposed upon himself to hurry the future. Waiting was well enough up to a certain length of time, beyond that limit his patience rebelled. He wanted her dreadfully. In truth, the thought of possessing her was too entrancing to dwell upon safely. If it had only been a mere matter of strength! But there was something else involved. It never entered the man's mind that he could propose to a girl without sufficient income to support her. He had learned what that brought—the tenement taught it with a thoroughness not to be avoided.

So he pinched harder, and squeezed, and went hungry and allowed himself only a part of Sunday for recreation. All the other days in the week he worked from seven until six. He suffered miserably, yet these periods of toil were lightened occasionally by glimpses of Miss Martin spelling, writing, playing on

that machine with the utmost unconcern. The very rattle of the keys was music to Cyrus' ears, because it was she who played. It did not trouble the man that she paid no heed to him—that probably she was not conscious of his existence. Knowledge of his presence would come in due course of time.

Cyrus had waited for the arithmetic and the reader and the geography—especially the geography. They had all come; even IT had come. He had learned the science of waiting complacently.

About this time a fellow was taken on at the factory with whom Cyrus struck up an immediate friendship. This was contrary to Warner's habits—he had found that friendships were exacting and expensive! generally he kept clear of them, but there was something in Kirby that was impressive because it was peculiar.

He was a thin, delicate-looking chap, with a nervous, active body and a face that showed the ravages of temper. Extreme, excessive temper—a temper that rode through his strength with a whirlwind of fury, and shattered all the vitality that could be got to-

gether in his body. Naturally it was a fearful hindrance. It kept the man almost continually out of a job. It was this that made him come and go empty-handed and poor, willing to take what he could get. Kirby was neither an ignorant, nor an incapable man; he had simply sacrificed everything to his master fury.

It may have been the discovery of Kirby's schooling that caught Cyrus; at any rate, the two became intimate. They were so inseparable that in time Kirby moved his belongings over to the house where Cyrus' fortress was situated. He took a room on the same floor, only across the hall, and settled down as a neighbor.

It came about in this way that their daily routine was changed, as their devotion to each other increased. They took turns at cooking the seven o'clock supper; afterward they spent the evening together. Sometimes they walked in the glare of the noisy, busy streets, jostling with the crowd, Kirby talking loudly to attract the attention of the girls. When they turned, showing their teeth and tossing their heads, he would call at them,

grinning facetiously. Kirby was a heavy joker in his lighter moods. Other evenings the two would sit at home smoking pipe after pipe of tobacco, discussing the problems of the day and their own individual interests.

Gradually Kirby discovered Cyrus' ambitions; his desire for an education, his greed to be somebody. At the same time Warner awakened to Kirby's inclination toward socialism. And it was a big awakening. It brought confusion to his mind. Never had Cyrus heard just such ideas or just such language as Kirby used. Sometimes it made him shiver and chill when Kirby, calling down the curses of the living God to smite the bodies of the rich, would announce that but for the capitalists he and Cyrus would be riding in carriages of their own, with money to burn. Then Kirby, seeing the effect of his words, followed up his points remorselessly. Excited by his own noise, he would continue a tirade of abuse. He shouted and yelled until the master fiend roused itself in self-defense, and what was commenced in a good-natured discussion, would finish in a fiery and disastrous exhibition of oratory.

It left Kirby limp, faint, and in spasms of exhaustion. Cyrus was frightened. At the same time he had to acknowledge to himself that he was profoundly impressed. It was a hideous complication that assailed him. All his theories of life were swept away. He could not even recall exactly what they were. He clasped his head with his hands. "I can't believe it—it is not possible—wait, wait, Kirby! You say they drive us down?"

He was terribly upset. Everything in the man's nature rebelled against what he had heard; but repetition drove it home. After a time he began to see through the haze of his confusion, then he wondered if perhaps capitalists were as black as Kirby pictured.

Argument did not come easily to Cyrus, but he could not rest. He had to fix this question somehow. After much mental labor Warner settled it according to his observance of rich people. They did not live for the sole purpose of grinding down the working class. He knew that. Besides, education taught broadness—all the rich were educated. That was a stopper to Kirby's assertions, and a stopper that no oratory could pull. But in

spite of this difference of opinion, and Cyrus clung tenaciously to his point of view, Warner was loyal to Kirby in everything else. More than once by sheer force of tact he saved the wretchedly tempered man from losing his place at the factory. In gratitude for this service, Kirby offered to assist Cyrus in his studies. After that the socialistic harangues, and the stock phrases of clap-trap politicians came with less frequency. Also because of what Kirby was doing for him, the greatest in all the catalogue of great things, Cyrus became his devoted friend. There was nothing the one could ask that the other would not do; they were closer than brothers; they were pals.

The student made great strides in his education; and it was due more to his learning than anything else that year by year small promotions came. Finally there was a good promotion, another raise of salary. His bank account was growing; Cyrus considered the situation, and confessed that the time to address Miss Martin was ripe.

CHAPTER II.

THAT question involved the most important and the most serious operation of Cyrus' life. He had seen Betty daily now for almost two years. Betty the demure, Betty the charming. Dressed in her simple, trim and dainty garments, with her hair curling down over her ears and forehead, she made a picture that fascinated the heart, as well as the eye.

Cyrus was sure her hair was redolent with the spices of Araby. He had never permitted himself an approach near enough to discover this for a fact; it was one of his dreams. He adored the way she held herself. He began to know by the very expression of the eyes whether she were sick or well or tired or fresh. Her hands, small, delicate fingered hands, became in his sight the most perfect thing the world possessed. The very fact that she was a woman touched him to the heart, for she was THE woman, the tender, fragile woman, whom he in time

was to be called upon to shield, protect and support. That was a dazzling thought, only to be met complacently by a man of knowledge and means.

He sat thinking of this one evening; in fact, of late he had been thinking of it continually, when Kirby came in. Kirby had been to a meeting, a gathering in some hall, where he had spoken until shouting reduced his voice to a whisper. He sat down on the edge of Cyrus' cot, talking rapidly. After a long time he asked abruptly: "Cy! what's up?"

The sudden appeal troubled Warner. The situation was uncomfortable. Kirby was sure to ridicule him, and just now that was more than he could bear. But he had no idea how to evade the orator. There was a dead silence for a moment, Cyrus feeling very helpless.

"Come on, Cy, out with it," pursued Kirby.

So Warner confessed—fully and completely. The more he talked the easier it became. Kirby sat listening intently, his white anaemic face ghastly under the shock of black hair that hung about it loose and stringy.

"You want to meet her, huh? That's the game?"

Cyrus nodded.

"That's dead easy; I can fix it. Shall I? Eh!"

Cyrus rose to his feet with a rush: "Do you mean it, Kirby? You are not joshing me." The revulsion of feeling that stirred in him was tremendous.

"Joshing? What in hell should I josh for, eh! Women are a big nuisance, but if you want to meet this one, why it's none of my funeral. Of course I'll fix it. It's dead simple." He was very certain. It was a swinging, scornful certainty. Kirby knew and understood women.

Cyrus looked at him dumbly, in full and unconcealed admiration. How was he to do it? This man could accomplish it if any one could, but how would he go at it? Of course Kirby was good for anything if he said so. The orator was a great man, and no mistake about that.

Cyrus did not question; he felt that to ask Kirby's methods after such an offer would be far from delicate. Warner attempted to utter

some phrases of thanks. Kirby disclaimed them, with great superiority; he felt his magnanimity, but he made a great pretense. He was always willing to see a friend through, and he and Cy were pals, weren't they—eh?

Cyrus went to bed in a state of happiness bordering on the imbecile. He found himself lying awake, thinking of her, and of what was to come, and the wonder of it all. From out of the darkness all about him her face shown sweet, pale, sympathetic, smiling upon him, and he smiled back. He was caught in the mesh of her fascinations, and he yielded without a struggle. In fact, it was all delicious. To be a man and to have a woman, a charmingly pretty woman, THE WOMAN —depending on you for all the happiness and comfort life brings, is an exhilarating affair.

Cyrus gave his cot a thump. "We'll have a spring and a hair mattress," he said aloud with great satisfaction. After many hours he fell asleep.

Kirby managed the introduction. He said that he would, and he kept his word; but it was not all as Cyrus would have liked. In the first place it was rather a bold proceeding

on Kirby's part. He had never spoken to Miss Martin before. This was not delicate of Kirby. Had Cyrus dreamed of such a possibility he would not have permitted the rudeness to Betty, the demure. In his heart, however, he was glad he had not known, for, in spite of the method, it was still an introduction; a passage of words that gave him the liberty of addressing her.

She was as demure in speech as she was in appearance; she had none of those high spirits and loud ways and flippant manners that pass often for vivacity. She was, instead, rather quaint and very gentle. Cyrus thrilled under her soft voice; it was so exactly as he would have had it. It was eminently the voice that he would like about his home—the home that he was to purchase some time for her as well as for himself.

That night he lay awake again. The entrancing visions that showed themselves in his fortress after dark were not to be missed. It was a white cottage with green blinds, set in a comfortable yard, that visited him. And as it floated above him quite as plainly as

reality could have made it, he heard her voice distinctly, calling to him, of course.

Those night dreams that from now on became regular occurrences took Cyrus quite out of the narrow, day-in-and-day-out monotony of factory life. They broadened his view, expanded his imagination and gave him an ambition for other things than merely an education. He put the screws on harder; there were days now when he suffered from actual and acute hunger. He worked over hours when he could and was filled with an enormous joy when he had enough put aside to warrant a trip to that savings bank—not for himself was this miserly habit acquired, not at all. It was that every day he liked Betty better and better. She took complete possession of him; it became a matter of resistance every time he was with her to keep down expressions of his infatuation. He was bewildered, dizzy, with the thought of obtaining what seemed so inaccessible, but so necessary. His life centered on Betty and their home; so he hoarded for her and for it—his wife and the cottage. It was a magnificent incentive to suffer and to work for.

But the incentive could not keep away the marks and ravages of what Cyrus was doing. He grew so thin that his cheek bones rose high in their places; he had a pinched, drawn look that gave a pathetic, heart-breaking expression to his face, for he always smiled. Beside this, he was living in a strained atmosphere of constant exaltation that sucked his vitality to the source. One day, while he was in the midst of his factory work, without the least warning, he fell down, lying white and cold and inert. He was in a complete faint, this great man of strength. He was carried into the manager's office, Kirby following in a state of high excitement, giving orders at every step. Betty, the demure, left her machine; she knelt beside the long, prostrate figure and bathed the man's head with her coarse little kerchief, stopping occasionally to chafe his big, thin hands, with her perfect little ones.

Kirby was in a great state. In his own way he had a strong fondness for this Cyrus; this gentle, unsophisticated, big-hearted Cyrus. He approved entirely of Miss Martin's course of action in this reviving, but he was

not pleased with her personally. It was, in fact, all her fault that Cyrus, the strong, was thus reduced—he guessed he knew how his friend was starving himself and why—all for this girl, who was a hell of a nuisance, any way you put it. It would end in her killing him yet.

When Kirby's mind had reached this conclusion his temper began to assume command; it also began to talk through Kirby, wildly, crazily and insultingly. He did not care what he said:

"Huh, you think you're great, I suppose, sitting there slobbing that man with a wet rag. You think you're deceiving me, don't you, but you ain't; not a bit. I know he's sweet on you, so do you, and you're playing him for a fool. He's starving himself for you. You'll probably pretend that's news. But it ain't; why else should he be cutting up a woman's trick like this. If you carry this thing too far, you want to look out. This is my friend, my pal. I won't stand one side and see him murdered in cold blood by a white-faced thing like you. I won't, by God!"

Betty's face had gone red, then very white

again; her hands trembled. But she did not get up, and, stranger still, she took no offense. Presently Cyrus' eyes opened heavily; they looked into her great eyes; he saw something there that startled him; his blood began a rapid course through his chilled body. He wished he could lie there forever, staring up at her.

Kirby spoiled it at once. He leaned over and assisted Cyrus to a chair, pulling the great fellow around easily. Cyrus wondered vaguely at so much strength in such a lank, lean body.

Immediately Miss Martin resumed her work. The manager suggested Cyrus' laying off a day, but Warner cast the idea aside with a laugh—he had been strengthened beyond any need of laying off, although his knees still shook and his body was numb.

He got up presently and went to work, Betty's eyes always before him. The pressure of that perfect, delicate-fingered hand, still to be felt on his wide forehead. But more wonderful than all this was yet to happen. That evening she waited for him. She made a great show of putting on her gloves,

but a keen observer would not have been misled. As he came down the steps past the office door, she whispered with her eyes turned away from his:

"Eat more, please; I want you to."

CHAPTER III.

AFTER that she spoke every day. She never looked at him, and that troubled Cyrus. It was such an effort for him to keep his eyes away from her; such a feast when he was permitted to look. Should she not feel the same way if she cared? Cyrus was not knowing in the ways of women. If he had been he would not have troubled about her bashfulness.

At last there came a Saturday night when he got up great courage and asked Miss Martin if she would walk in the park with him the next afternoon. He had rehearsed the speech over and again for weeks—it was the preliminary of the courting—the first shot towards the cottage with the green blinds. He had never planned nor prepared for a refusal; nor did he receive one, after he floundered through the invitation. Yet her acceptance upset him terribly. He could scarcely breathe, and the sensation of suffocation did not wear off for hours.

He was up and down half the night to watch the weather. By lying prone his full length on the floor he could just get a peep at the sky from out of his windows, and the stars up there wheeling around in their course. When he could see one, he gave a sigh and went back to bed in peace. Once he lost all sight of them. It was a tragedy. Of course it was clouding up—probably would storm terribly all day. That was apt to make her superstitious—women were born superstitious. If the weather was not propitious for that first outing, she might believe that fate was dead against them. There was no telling how women regarded these things.

He spent a wretched fifteen minutes, then he looked again. Up between the steep walls blinked a little point of light. It was there bright, beautiful and clear, thank Heaven! How could he have imagined a storm was imminent. For fear of another such fright he took his pillow and blanket from his cot and lay on the floor until daylight, his face looking up into the face of the Heavens.

Cyrus called for Betty at three o'clock; precisely three. That was the time she had

set. He was at the corner below an hour earlier, but he presented himself at the door only when he was told he might. Never had he been so nervous, or so intensely happy. The day was perfect; warm enough to make an overcoat a nuisance.

Betty came down looking adorable. She was in her best things, naturally, it being Sunday. Cyrus hitherto had only viewed her in her office garments. She was charming in those, but absolutely irresistible now.

As he stepped along beside her, he was suddenly filled with grave apprehensions. Surely she was not for him. He was so awkward, so colossal, and somehow so unlovely. He was a fool to hope that she could care for him. He was so evidently out of place beside this little woman.

When this knowledge took possession of him, he began to be assailed with huge doubts, the contrast between them was so hideous. How could this dainty, refined bit of a woman ever look upon him with favor? It was impossible. His size, his gait, his awkwardness, his lack of personal beauty all told against him. He had never considered

these things before; now they were uppermost in his mind. Everything else shrank away from him. He was breathless with disgust as he squinted down upon himself.

Betty, however, appeared to be taking his defects calmly; in fact, she did not seem to be aware of them. From time to time she raised her splendid eyes and looked him in the face. Directly this occurred Cyrus lost the drift of all he was saying and stammered horribly; yet he enjoyed those glances.

Presently they sat down upon the grass; the sunshine was delicious; so was the air. All at once a kind of faintness crept over the man; he was suddenly conscious that he was near her—very near her—near enough to catch the perfume from her hair. The spices of Araby were there, surely; they hypnotized him.

From that moment Cyrus Warner was less hounded by thoughts of self-denunciation. He had little idea of anything that happened or of anything that was said. He kept wanting to do something; something immense, something wonderful; something that from sheer strength or manliness should put him from a

masculine standpoint on an equal footing with this delicate creature. He wanted to make her proud of him; but no opportunity for such an achievement arrived. It seemed to him a dastardly trick of fate to deny him this privilege. Until he could prove himself he had no right to love and aspire to this perfect being. It was sacrilege.

His silence kept Betty very busy of tongue. She enjoyed everything thoroughly and expressed her pleasure by infectious little laughs and a great deal of merry talk. She said nothing of much import, but Cyrus hung on her words bewitched. Oh, he was very much in love, this man! Very seriously in love.

At half-past five he took her home. It had only been a minute since they started out. He was sure of it. The clocks said five-thirty —they lied; so she took out her watch. He believed that, because the time-piece belonged to her; but he asserted loudly that the hands might have dropped; it could not be five-thirty—it was absurd!

Then she did laugh, and he joined in. When he could catch his breath long enough to

speak, he asked boldly if he could take her out again next week. She hesitated just a moment; then she called: "Yes, if you will believe the clocks."

He roared again—she was the acme of wit. He finally returned to his fortress in a high state of vibrating happiness. What a day it had been—what a day!

At nine o'clock that same night Kirby arrived outside Cyrus' door. Ordinarily, Cyrus would have been in bed and asleep at that hour on Sunday. This evening, instead, he was reading his geography by the light of a candle.

"All right," he called in response to Kirby's cry; "come in," and Kirby entered.

He had been busy at oratory again tonight; but he had not his usual color and aggressive manner—the aftermath of his speeches. He was breathing short and looking sheepish.

"What's up? Any trouble?" said Cyrus.

"Oh, no; what trouble should I be in?" He crossed his legs, looking about the room. Every once in a while he sighed noisily and stirred in his chair—it was very evident that

he wanted to be questioned about something.

"Did you speak at the show?"

"Rather."

"Well, what's the row? There's something up. Let's have it straight."

"You thought I could speak, didn't you? Everybody who's ever heard me thought I could speak, didn't they—huh?"

Cyrus nodded. "I have never heard to the contrary."

"Well, all I've got to say is, I wish you'd been with me tonight. Talk about speakin' —I ain't in it. I never touched a speech. I don't know what the word 'speakin'' means; but there's a woman—God, that woman; you never heard anything like it! She can talk! I am beat, and down with my hands tied behind me," and then, in answer to Cyrus' astonished face, the orator settled himself and continued. He gave a complete outline of what he had heard, and his own position.

"She come out there and stood up before us—a room full—and I said to my neighbors, 'Oh, Gee; what's this, anyhow, a missionary meeting?' She wasn't bigger'n a

minute, and pretty—well, she's the prettiest thing in the shape of a woman I ever came up against. She wasn't flustered—and did she know her business? Well, did she! That's all I can say—did she? She didn't speak loud; never roared once; but Gee whiz! how she did land words. Cy, she lammed the capitalists something immense. The Bloody Shirt dripped. All I can say is, she can have me; and that any time she says the word. I ain't givin' myself away every day, either. Lord, what a team we'd make—the two of us—there's money in us for somebody."

Kirby stopped and mopped his face. He could see himself and a fine future vividly. He would improve his ideas with hers, and take her tricks of expression; this coupled with his delivery and his explosive epithets would make an irresistible combination. A low tone was well enough for a time, but it took his voice to stampede a meeting in the long run. Dimly, as though he looked through a mist, Kirby saw himself leading a vast concourse of men—men of toil, men of strength, men of the down-trodden class. They rose in a mass to follow him. It was

not a place for a woman that he saw. It was a man's place—his place. Ah, he would lead! Those white-collared slaves of indolent ease, who bossed, and controlled and murdered, would learn who he was and what. Also in this vision, but in the background—back of him—he perceived that woman; her face alight with admiration for him; her mouth closed under the spell of what he was saying for them both. It was a triumphant panorama.

All this time Cyrus sat bewildered; never had he known Kirby to be like this before. There was a cold pause. Kirby was in a queer fix sure, but for once Cyrus could not sympathize. In his silent communion with Betty this noise and furore found no place. He became uneasy and perturbed by Kirby's ranting voice. Finally it drove all his thoughts to riot and scattered his dream. After that he sat in sullen silence, wishing the fierce-tongued orator would go to bed.

Kirby sat and sat; he talked, and talked and got excited. His face flushed, and dripped until he was like a lathered animal. Probably in its way it was a remarkable flow

of language; but it dizzied Cyrus. He tried not to listen. He did not want to listen; but where was the escape? The orator had been deprived of his applause at the meeting, so he appealed to his pal. He had to talk. It was a physical need.

"I want my rights. You want yours. We've been played for suckers long enough. Where's the laboring man goin' to stand, huh? There's got to come a day of reckoning, and then we'll see. I'll be there—so'll you—so'll the capitalist; but he won't be IT that day. This is called 'Free America,' ain't it? Who's free?—you, me, the fellow who works? I'd like to know. It's the rich that's got the cinch on freedom, but some day the workingman'll rise up and find out he wants the cinch. See? Huh! Then," he shouted, rising and pounding the cot, "we'll see. I'll be there. You can count me—Kirby—in. The working man don't know his business yet. He's too easy. But you wait. I'm in this game. In to stay; and I'm doing something besides shouting, too, by God. You just wait. We ain't all dubs, by a damn sight."

"Shut up, Kirby. You're shouting now. Go to bed. I'm sleepy." Cyrus got up and gave Kirby a good-natured shove. Out in the street a clock struck twelve. Kirby, reminded of the time, yawned and stretched. "All right, Cy." The orator's voice subsided at once. "But you watch me. I'll lift the yoke yet. I won't stand by forever and see the life crushed out of labor by these tyrants. Good night." Yawning and growling, Kirby disappeared down the hall.

Immensely relieved, Cyrus closed and locked his fortress. He undressed slowly, rejoicing in the quiet and solitude. But Betty was gone for tonight. The visions and dreams would not be coaxed back. Kirby had frightened them with his tirades. Vainly Cyrus lay staring wide-eyed and waiting there in the darkness.

"The fool's spoiled my whole evening. She does not like what he's been saying; so she won't come. Damn it all, I don't blame her. I don't like it myself."

CHAPTER IV.

CYRUS' courtship progressed without his appreciating it. Every Sunday afternoon Betty and he walked together. He continued to call for her at three o'clock and Betty would meet him flushed and smiling and ready to enjoy everything. When it stormed the two visited art galleries and museums. She pointed out the pictures that caught her fancy and he promptly admired them, trying to use words that would not come. When the weather permitted they strolled through the park or took long cable car rides, always sitting on the front seat of the grip; that necessitated some squeezing and brought them very close together. The first time that this happened she blushed to the tips of her ears, and Cyrus had been painfully embarrassed; but afterward they laughed and joked, never thinking of changing.

These rides were flashes of Paradise. On the grip car she was wholly his. There she sat, her wonderful eyes aglow with pleasure,

a tinge of color in her pale face. She was sweet, pretty, adorable above all other women; charming him into an humble masculine submission by a hundred fascinations, all her own. It was very wonderful! Life was beautiful. So beautiful that he could not absorb it all. How he longed on Sunday evenings to live the day all over again by himself! But that bliss was denied to him, and he did not complain, because he felt that he had too much as it was. There was a certain limit to happiness, and he was constantly uneasy for fear he would overstep.

The meetings of the socialists continued. Every Sunday night the orator went to Cyrus and rehearsed all that had occurred. Contrary to his usual methods, however. Kirby spoke very little of himself and a great deal of that woman. She had made a big effect on him. Her name was Ida Fisher; she was of German parentage, and was a wonder. As far as Cyrus could discern, she was always speaking. That was her life "vocation," Kirby announced, watching Cyrus suspiciously to see how he took the word.

It was a habit with Kirby; he eyed every

one except Cyrus suspiciously when he talked. But he only began it with his pal when Fraulein Fisher was mentioned.

The days passed. That fall Cyrus Warner received an unexpected advancement in position, with an increased salary. It decided matters. The man awakened suddenly to find that his dream was a reality. It was here. He had enough to marry on. An income sufficient for the support of a wife.

He laid awake all night, stunned by the suddenness and ease with which it had finally happened. He had waited for this very thing thirty years, yet nothing could have taken him more completely unawares. It was extraordinary; it was incomprehensible. Next Sunday he could tell Betty. It was not necessary to woo any longer. He was in a position to ask her to face life with him. It was Wednesday now. What would she do and say? When he thought of this he became afraid. It was a fear that checked his joy, and made him cold and uneasy. He had thought of her as his future wife ever since that time long ago when he first saw her. It was no new idea to him: but with her—prob-

ably she had never dreamed of such a marriage—she might be frightened at the mere prospect. Worse still, suppose she would have none of him? Of what use, then, would be all this money and all this education? Without her there could be no cottage; no future. He groaned aloud, fearfully alarmed. How could he wait until Sunday to settle matters.

He decided finally that he would speak the first thing in the morning. That was it. No waiting for him. The idea pleased him. He would have it out and settled one way or the other. At daylight he altered the plan. He argued the matter while he dressed slowly. He lighted the oil stove, and stood the kettle over the blaze without remembering to fill it with water.

If he was to lose her, he wanted to postpone the loss as long as possible. Best not hurry matters, he concluded. He would wait after all, letting things take their course. Suddenly he remembered the kettle, and for a second his mind was busy with household duties.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday were spent

in alternate gloom and elation; he was hot and cold by turns. He talked the situation over every night with Kirby. Instead of being struck dumb as Warner had imagined, Kirby grew strangely sympathetic with his friend's love affair. The orator listened eagerly. Some day—perhaps—he would ask a woman to marry him. A woman who—who was in accord with his notions of life. Yes, no doubt about it, it would be a woman who spoke.

"Ah, you're all right, Cy. She won't play you dirt. I just wish I had your chance, that's all."

Cyrus was frightened. "You ain't in love with her, too?" he exclaimed, aghast.

"Shu! what's the matter with you? She ain't the only girl, is she? If I get sweet on any one, it'll be one that can talk."

Kirby spit this out between puffs; he was lighting his pipe, feigning great abstraction.

Cyrus' eyes rolled. Being in love, he was terribly acute about its symptoms. He stared a minute; all at once he shoved out an enormous hand; there was a big grin on his gentle face. Kirby stared in his turn, taking time

to adjust himself. But he could trust Cy. They pulled together. Both men rose, and gripped, wringing each other's hands silently. It was an entire understanding that existed here. What a fine thing a friendship was that even marriage could not break! That, no matter what happened, they could always be pals.

"Don't get weak. Don't give in. You're all right, Cy," was Kirby's parting bracer on Saturday night.

But Cyrus walked miles on Sunday morning to get sufficient courage to steady his knees.

It was another heavenly day, clear and cool. Betty wore a new jacket. It fitted her trim little figure to perfection. But her loveliness made the man's heart sink. If only she were less ideal, a little rougher, so that he were more on a level with her.

Betty pretended not to notice Cyrus' embarrassment. Yet it was so pronounced that she herself became uneasy. He stammered over everything he tried to utter. He grew flushed and hot, though the wind was blowing fiercely from the northeast. It seemed to

him that the difficulties before him were insurmountable.

They got off the car at the far limit of its run; it was country there, with a patch of woods and great big trees, and a hint of sweetness in the air. They wandered along side by side, very happy, and by this time not constrained; still they were a trifle uncertain.

Cyrus was attempting a conversation. Every time he began to talk, Betty raised her eyes and listened, very much interested. It was pleasant, only he could never say what he wished when she looked at him.

"Wait till we get back of those trees; then ——" Cyrus said under his breath, making a strong mental resolve. "Once there—well." But back of those trees he stopped and stared, his mouth opened wide in blank amazement. On the grass sat Kirby; by his side was a little woman with an unhappy, haunted face. Her lips were constantly quivering; her eyes looked at everything beseechingly.

Kirby sprang to his feet. "Cy! Ain't this

luck?" The orator's face had gone red on the instant.

There was quite a flurry of excitement. The men shook hands, this action giving them time to think. The women viewed each other. A sensation of pity swept over Betty the demure, and it was this sensation which caused her to smile adorably when Kirby made them acquainted.

But Cyrus could not get used to the thing at all. He looked from one to another stupidly, completely non-plussed. It was here that he was to propose to Betty; now, instead, he was one of a party of people. He could not think of a thing to say. He had no idea what to do. His helplessness was complete. When Kirby nudged him, however, Cyrus did remember to take off his hat to Miss Fisher.

The women seated themselves; they did not rustle their skirts and giggle, and they displayed no tricks to call to themselves the attention of the men.

"Wasn't it strange that we should have met, way out here?" said Betty.

"Every Sunday when the weather is fine Mr. Kirby and I come out here for a few

moments." The inflection in Ida's voice was very gentle."

"We get rested here before we have to speak," said Kirby.

"Of course. I wish we had brought a lunch; we could have had supper here together," said Betty, nodding and smiling up at Cyrus.

His face had been blank; at once it lighted into being, and he smiled back. "Sure—supper out here," he repeated.

"We love picnics, our race. They are dear to the German heart," sighed Miss Fisher.

"What's the matter with arranging one—eh?" shouted Kirby, alert on the minute.

"That would be nice."

"Just us four, eh?"

"Good work——"

"But the weather—isn't it too cold? We might wait until next spring, and go into the woods." The strong wind carried a chill in it. Betty shivered as she spoke.

"Certainly it's too late for picnics," asserted Cyrus, expressing his first coherent idea since this unfortunate meeting. There was a pause.

"Say, Cy, I heard of a great thing for a fellow that's got a little cash he wants to blow. It's great."

"What?"

"Well, Miss Fisher's got a brother who ain't strong; he's got some property in the south of this State, with oil on it. He wants to sell, dirt cheap. It's a chance for a fellow with cash."

The idea caught Cyrus' fancy; if it was a good chance, why, he had cash.

"Is it in the country?"

"Oh, I dunno. How is that, Ida?"

Miss Fisher, thus appealed to, explained: "Otto has consumption. The doctors say he must go away—West—if he wants to live. It is a little town, a village, and there is much oil there. My brother has a good well, only he has never had any money from it yet, for he's only just got it ready. It's too bad. He needs money awfully. There's a home on the place. A cottage with six rooms."

"What a pity he has to leave before he gets anything," said Betty, all sympathy.

"A cottage?—white?" Cyrus' eyes were burning. This was a startling bit of intelligence.

"Yes. How did you know?" put in Miss Fisher.

Cyrus blushed and stammered. Kirby came to the rescue. He gave a labored wink. "Oh, Cy knows his business," he said. Both women laughed, Betty a little consciously.

"I haven't any money saved. If I had, you bet I'd take this, good and plenty. Be your own master, is my idea. No working for a corporation. No being ground under. No, siree. That's why this is a pipe. Here you are oiling for yourself. Selling your own products. It's a big chance for a fellow with cash."

Cyrus was roused; he was so excited with the sound of this opportunity that he could not keep still. It seemed to be so exactly what he wanted. He was afraid some one would get in ahead of him. Why hadn't he heard of it before? A cottage, white too; six rooms! Oh, here was luck if he wasn't too late! The whole dream, entrancing as a fairy tale, come true in a minute. The future jumping at a bound into the present.

He made Ida promise to write to Otto that very night. He wanted to know exactly how

things stood; if it wasn't asking too much, he would like a plat of the property too; so that he'd be familiar with the lay of the land. He had some money laid by, and perhaps—maybe—he would take the chance, if Kirby was sure it was all right and Otto would come to good terms.

"All right!" ejaculated the orator. "Well, all I can say is, I wish things like that would come my way just once, when I had the cash to blow. That's all I wish."

Betty arose. She was cold, and thought that they had better get back. Miss Fisher and Kirby were to speak that night as usual at a hall only two blocks away. Kirby made a sweeping bow to Betty, talking easily at the same time. Cyrus was amazed at the orator's grace of manner. The two socialists were sorry they could not ride to town with the other two. Betty echoed the regret, and that put a damper on Cyrus' rising spirits. He had been immensely pleased with the turn things had taken, for the ride home left him a chance to speak. But he said he was sorry to leave, because the others said so, and they all talked at once when they said good-

bye. Then Betty and Cyrus raced for the car that was just coming out of the barn, and caught it, breathless and flushed. In spite of the cold they clambered up on the front seat of the grip.

"Were you sorry they couldn't come?" asked Cyrus uneasily. He wanted to know the worst without delay.

Betty did not answer, but something in her eyes made him take courage. He had no words ready, so he plunged into the thing desperately, and told her somehow what she was to him, and what he wanted to be to her.

When he got through he was conscious in every part of his big frame that he had put the matter before her hideously. What girl could consider such a wretched proposal? But it was out, and he waited in fearful, terrifying suspense. Betty turned her face to him; it was radiant; she snuggled herself a little closer.

"You dear old silly; I have loved you ever since I found you were starving yourself for me. I even loved that noisy Kirby because he told me about it," she said.

CHAPTER V.

IT was quite true; Betty the demure did love Cyrus. She laughed to herself that she had concealed it so cleverly. The woman instinct in her had divined long ago what Cyrus was. She saw his kindness and the bigness of his heart; his steadfastness and moral reliability. She knew that a woman's life with him would be exactly what the woman herself made it. His wife would always be his influence; it would remain with her whether the future held happiness or discontent. He might never forestall her wishes, but those wishes once expressed would be carried out to the letter. He would never seek to conquer or control, and yet he would always command respect. His gentleness was his strength. His determination his guide.

Betty had no qualms, no fears about trusting herself to him; there were no risks here. She thanked the chance that had thrown them together, and she loved him in her quiet, deep way, that boded well for what the future might bring.

Cyrus saw her regularly every evening. It was not exactly courting, for he never mentioned love. It was characteristic of the man, too, that he never kissed her face. He did not smother her with embraces or grip her with his hands. Occasionally at parting he bent down his height, great above hers, and pressed his lips to her hair—that curly hair redolent with the odors of Araby. That was all; yet he often had a desire, an intense desire to kiss her; but somehow he could not. It seemed an indelicacy. In his own estimation he was so coarse and heavy and clumsy, that to hold her was like the crushing of a flower in some monster machine.

Betty understood perfectly, and loved him the more for it. These things convinced her of her safety with him. Then what evenings they spent—all confidences and plans! And how they did agree! When Cyrus spoke of the white cottage Betty was enchanted.

"I can cook, Cyrus; really I can. You would not think it knowing my work; but I can. Oh, it will be so nice, a home of our own. I have always wanted one."

"And a garden with geraniums?"

"Yes, and sweet peas. I love those; don't you. Oh, oh, it's all too wonderful. I wonder when we will hear from Mr. Fisher. I love the country, Cyrus."

Cyrus had written about the well. He had exhibited the letter with huge pride to Betty. She read it all through.

"What a beautiful hand you write," was her first remark.

Then Cyrus' cup was filled to the utmost. "If Fisher would be satisfied with half-payment down, a mortgage on the property and the rest of the amount in semi-annual installments, Cyrus had decided to take the bargain. He wrote to that effect.

Kirby had assured Cyrus violently that Fisher's price had been dirt cheap, by God; clear in the limit; and Betty had clinched the matter by saying: "You see, Cyrus, we would have our home and your business there all together. We won't have to be separated a minute."

Clearly it was a great all round stroke of luck.

Fisher, however, was slow in answering; probably because he was ill and not quick at

decisions. Meanwhile the matter was discussed nightly. At these discussions Cyrus forgot his uneasiness of mind at Fisher's procrastination, giving himself up completely to the fascination of Betty's ideas. Away from her he fumed and fretted, his apprehensions assuming enormous proportions. Fisher was a fool, a blackguard; he would never answer; he had led Cyrus on to make the offer and then had changed his mind. Perhaps was laughing up his sleeve at Cyrus' simplicity in thinking he would let go of a good thing. Worse yet, he may have found some rich man who could pay the full amount at a sitting. Oh, these capitalists, how they were continually getting into the laboring man's way!

So Cyrus nightly worked himself into a fever that told on him more than those periods of starvation.

It was Fisher's letter that was to decide their wedding day. Under such conditions a man much in love is not to be condemned for ill-temper.

At last it came. Cyrus tore open the envelope. He was so confused he could not read a word.

"What! what!" he kept exclaiming; "I never saw such writing." The letters were swimming upside down; there was not a straight mark on the page.

He was at the factory; he tore across to Kirby.

"Eh, what's this?" said Kirby.

"A letter—Fisher's." Cyrus had never seen Kirby stupid before.

"Oh, yes; well, what does he say?"

"That's it, that's it—what does he say? Read it out; I can't see."

By degrees it got into Kirby's understanding what was wanted. He felt his importance immediately, and got his voice into his professional orotund. It was all right—Fisher accepted the terms; but he put in one condition, to the effect that the cold weather was doing him so bad the doctors said he must go away at once; therefore, Cyrus was asked to make the payment and assume control without delay.

"How's that?" said Kirby. "Oh, but you're IT!"

"All right; all right," nodded Cyrus. To

himself he was saying, "It ain't true; I'll wake up pretty soon. It ain't true."

But it was. When he told Betty she clapped her hands. They were getting thin, those perfectly figured hands. He saw it, and raising them to his lips he kissed them. Cyrus was to write that night, saying he would come on in two weeks.

"I'll tell him my wife and I'll take possession two weeks from today," he suggested. She nodded and smiled and flushed. Her happiness had entire hold on her.

"It will keep me busy. I have been getting some of my things made. I am glad now that I did. Still, I have more to get."

Oh, but this was life, glorious life. Betty had managed to save something, too. Out of her little funds she purchased her trousseau and left some to help furnish the cottage. She gave Cyrus some odd-shaped packages to put in his trunk. He carried them to his fortress very flustered. The strangeness of it thrilled him from his head to his heels and set him a-tremble with delight—carrying her "things."

They were to be married at the minister's.

Neither the bride nor the groom had any family. Kirby and Ida were to be present in the double capacity of witnesses and guests.

"Ida is like one of the family, Cyrus. We are taking her brother's home and well, you see," said Betty.

Of course, Ida was closely related. Cyrus wondered at himself that he had not remembered this. The ceremony would take place at twelve o'clock; then the four were to dine together at a restaurant Kirby had recommended. At five the same afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Warner would leave for their future dwelling.

Betty attended to everything. There were not many details, but what there were rendered Cyrus useless. By forfeiting a week's wages Betty was permitted to leave the factory on short notice; but the day she and Cyrus finished, the company did the handsome thing by them.

In a little speech that left Cyrus helpless with embarrassment the manager presented to the future bride and groom, in the name of the company and as a mark of appreciation for their joint excellent services, an entire set

of dishes, sixty-one pieces. These were to be shipped to their home, expressage paid by the company.

Betty received the present charmingly. She covered Cyrus' confusion by her tact and graciousness. Then both of them shook the manager's hand and thanked him for his kindness.

This ordeal over, Cyrus sighed deeply with relief. He did not dream what was before him. At the door of the factory, ranged in a double line that extended out into the street, were all the factory hands. Kirby had marshalled them, and was waving his arms and shouting orders from the head. Here was a chance for exerting his powers as a leader of men.

"Here they are. Now, then—spit it out!"

Cheered, jostled and joshed, Betty and Cyrus marched down the long line. At their heads, at their bodies, at their feet were aimed showers of rice. There were calls and good-wishes from every one; but the rice was paramount. Betty covered her face and ran; Cyrus followed. Never had he been so completely upset. He was paralyzed. What

should he do? What was expected of him? He joined in the fun. He tried to return joke for joke. He paused to poke half a dozen men in the ribs. He laughed with fearful sounds. When he was finally rid of that crowd Betty was two blocks ahead. He was stinging and scratched where the rice had hit him. For weeks after whenever he wore those clothes he scattered rice as he moved.

In time he learned to look back upon the episode of parting as a tremendously funny thing. But what he suffered while he was in the midst of it even Betty did not know.

CHAPTER VI.

NEITHER Betty nor Cyrus could tell much of that first year in their new home. It took them weeks to get really settled. Their things were slow in coming. Extra shelves had to be put up to hold those sixty-one dishes. Cupboards that Betty needed for kettles and pans were lacking. It took Cyrus a long time to get into the new work. He read all the literature on oil that was obtainable, and the more he read the surer he became that he had a good thing.

But it was all good fun, even after the excited happiness of the honeymoon had drifted into sober, steadfast contentment and housekeeping had become automatic. These two loved each other as a man and woman should love—he seeing a divinity worthy of worship in her; she knowing him to be a noble, generous, high-souled being and ready to mould her personality into his. They were never assailed with doubts; never even thinking of such a thing. There was no disputing of authority. Betty belonged to Cyrus; she liked

to say it and feel it; yet. womanlike, knew all along that it was she who ruled; not autocratically, but with love. The initiative in everything came from her, yet Cyrus was never conscious of being led.

Betty had none of those infinite longings, none of that homesickness for past freedom that is so paralyzing to a young husband. She had had no home for years. She had no regrets; no dreads of future responsibilities. She was happy and she made him happy; and happiness and love settled the beginning of their life together into adaptable grooves. Betty showed after a little practice that a stenographer is not necessarily a poor housekeeper; she was neatness personified, an admirable manager, a good worker. From the windows of her little kitchen she could see Cyrus at the well. She would stop in her baking to wave at him or call out. Then he would straighten up his tall form from his work to smile back an answer. She sang at her cleaning, carolling about the house all day, like a bird; and Cyrus whistled—no tune that had ever been heard of before, but expressive in its tunelessness of his complete

content. His gentleness increased hourly. His good-will and readiness to help made him popular in the immediate neighborhood. By degrees this popularity broadened until Cyrus Warner was one of the best-liked men in the town. This delighted Betty; she gloried in his praises. With wonderful tact she added to this reputation of his by deeds all her own, for which she received no credit and wanted none. It was enough to her that Cyrus was loved. Oh, it was a dream, this life in the cottage. It was all either one of them asked. It was enough for any one.

At the end of the first year their little girl came. When it was over Cyrus went all to pieces. He cried and sobbed like a child, and Betty at the other end of the house cried in sympathy. The nurse brewed a cup of strong tea. After gulping it down in immense mouthfuls that burned fearfully all the way, Cyrus felt better. He tiptoed into the bedroom where Betty lay, very white, but prettier than ever before, smiling a greeting at him. The sight of her alive and well unnerved him. He had been sure she would die, she was so delicate, so fragile. He had had no courage

at all. He knelt down, putting his face against her hand, speechless with emotion.

Presently he tiptoed out again. She was to be guarded against excitement and visitors. He lay awake all that night, thanking God that she was spared to him. Once the high wail of a little voice came out to him. For a moment he pondered with bewilderment, wondered what it was and where it came from. Afterwards he was ashamed. To think he had forgotten his daughter—his own daughter!

He never forgot again. As that little mite of humanity, the second Betty, grew, every inch of her stature became part of her big father. He groveled at her feet in abject adoration. He was sure there had never been such a child. She never took her mother's place in his heart—no one could do that; but that heart expanded. It had practically taken possession of the man's body. It was a different love that he gave these two, but each was as strong in its own way as the other. His blessings were enormous. He was overwhelmed with what had come to him.

The well paid; its store of oil seemed inex-

haustible; people spoke of it as the best "flower" in the district, and the semi-annual payments were met regularly. Of course it took care and saving, but Betty was an economical manager, and so was Cyrus for himself. Penuriousness, however, took a different turn when pennies were put away from his wife and baby. Without Betty's guiding hand, the man would have grown extravagant for her. So the little woman saved secretly from her housekeeping fund, putting away quarters and half-dollars until she hoarded quite a sum. When she handed the amount to Cyrus, it was great fun. His face was such a study on these occasions. Then she would tell him just to wait until the well was all their own. She wouldn't save a cent after that, but spend everything. Oh, she would be extravagant then; just let Cyrus wait. She announced this gaily, taking his face between her hands and kissing it.

At the sound of her merriment the baby would totter and teeter and fall against her father's knee in her effort to be taken up and petted. Then Cyrus would sit down and hold both of these little women of his own

and the deliciousness of life was beyond him. There was no such thing as time; there was just the sweetness of existence.

Winters and summers came and passed. The life of the Warners went on in its accustomed grooves. Both were perfectly contented with the even monotony of the days. At long intervals there came a break in the work. Every fall people from all over the country sent in all manner of exhibits to the town. Monstrous cattle, sleek and well groomed; abnormally fat hogs, only a few months old; pumpkins and squash that resembled some antediluvian mammoth. Patch-work of fearful design; hand-made paintings, usually flowers or fruit, framed in plush; silk quilts worked by old women and covered with impossible raised flowers done in chenille; jelly, pickles, canned fruit.

The arrival of these things was the signal for great confusion. All day there was a persistent noise of sawing and hammering. Booths went up, squares were fenced off for the animals, boxes and crates littered the street. Women stood in groups chattering, laughing, occasional ends of their conversa-

tion breaking out clear above the murmur. The crowd increased hourly. Everywhere there arose a vast babble of noise; a mingled roar of animals' cries and human voices.

All previous air of village quiet and relaxation was thrown off. Here and there, like the purring of some enormous cat, came the sound of machinery; a young woman from a distant city spent many hours a day banging tunes out of a piano that had various attachments—a zither, a banjo, an organ. She explained the instrument before each performance.

For blocks around wagons, buggies, carryalls were lined against the sidewalk head on, the horses sleeping all day. There was a big hurry of business; clouds of dust settled over everything. The town gave itself over to the county fair, and bristled with noise and importance.

Side-shows hung on to the skirts of the exhibits. There was a circus, where acts of all kinds astonished the audience, every afternoon and evening. In the morning the performers paraded the streets behind a brass band; very tired, very slovenly, very badly

painted, but attired in a bewilderment of gorgeous colors.

Across from the circus tent was a water tank built in an ungainly wagon. Flaming placards announced this as the home of a remarkable rhinoceros, with a hideous expanse of mouth, and a dangerous disposition. A man stood on the step, urging the men to bring in their ladies; admission ten cents. He shouted and joked. He kept every one in excellent humor. Crowds stood before the wagon all day, staring at first one poster then another, commenting, shaking their heads. Occasionally one or two went in, looking foolish and feigning great unconsciousness.

In a cage the size of a room sat a South Sea Island cannibal. The children elbowed their way to the front, peering through the wire netting, shuddering while they looked. The keeper sat on a raised platform. With huge flourishes of his arms he continually assured them that the creature was perfectly safe—even affectionate if well fed.

To prove his words he thrust his hand between the bars with a great show of care-

lessness, and whistled at the same time. It was a tremendous moment.

By the second day order was evolved out of chaos. The people in the village knew this. Year after year it was the second day of the Fair that they attended. Cyrus and Betty and the baby left home early. As they approached the scene of operation the air was full of many odors—hay, cigar smoke, steaming cattle, cooking coffee, stale vegetables. The excitement too was intense; the spirit of rivalry rampant with owners of squash and turnip. There were loud discussions between farmers as to the relative merits of certain pigs and sheep.

Every now and then a restless rooster would pierce the air with its shrill crow.

Cyrus and Betty spent the morning looking at all the exhibits carefully and commenting freely. Every little while they paused to greet a friend. It was like an immense party with no responsibility attached.

Old Man Shoyer, the wit of the county, who hadn't missed a Fair for forty years, was on hand. He was one of the sights, and knew it, and felt hurt if he wasn't noticed. Every-

where he went peals of laughter followed. His sayings were repeated faithfully over and over.

Shoyer edged up to Mrs. Warner. She was looking at a long green cucumber, set up to resemble a snake. There were black beads put in for eyes, and a painted mouth from which a forked tongue protruded, with wild fierceness. Shoyer looked, too, mumbling his lips that curved in instead of out. Silence fell. Every one waited.

"If I'm any jedge o' horseflesh, Mis' Warner, that cucumber is a pretty good sarpint."

Betty smiled, but Cyrus was pleased beyond measure. He roared and shouted. A crowd collected.

"What did he say?"

"Mr. Warner, tell us, tell us!"

"Ain't he just the funniest man."

"Shoyer's all right, by gosh! He's all right."

Cyrus repeated the joke all day. Whenever he looked at an exhibit that caught his fancy he would begin, "If I'm any jedge o' horseflesh——" then shouted again.

Little Betty was lifted up to pat the cows.

She crowed and waved her hands, squealing with joy. The women all turned to look at her. Everywhere there were murmurs, "How sweet; isn't she just cute? And so pretty."

Cyrus was overcome with pride; his face beamed. "I wish there was a baby show," he said to Betty.

The Warners had lunch at the Fair. Chicken pie, coffee or tea, and apple or pumpkin pie. It was hot and good, and all you paid was fifteen cents apiece. The woman who served it commented on its excellence and the absurdity of the price.

"I ain't begrudgin' nothin', but I ain't makin' money, either," she repeated. "Still, I wouldn't miss a Fair if it bankrupt me and my ole man both."

Cyrus was impressed. He ate in huge mouthfuls, listening and nodding sympathy over his fork. When he was through he was so affected that he gave the woman half a dollar—a quarter for himself, a quarter for Betty. As soon as they had eaten they hurried to the circus tent. It was too early for the performance. Rows of empty benches ran all around the interior except where the

curtain led back into the dressing room. There was a strong smell of sawdust.

"It is nice to rest a minute," sighed Betty; "besides, I can get baby to sleep."

Cyrus got out his pipe. Betty cuddled the little child close in her arms, rocking her body to and fro, singing all the time in a low tone. The racket outside was a subdued murmur here.

Presently the tent began to fill up. Shoyer came in with a great following. The report got around that the clown was going to try and get the better of the old man. His pockets bulged with apples. At intervals all through the afternoon he passed the fruit around to his neighbors.

It was a great performance. Cyrus could have sat there forever. The barebacked rider was a marvel; the woman on the trapeze left him breathless.

"I wonder what Shoyer says to that!" he gasped.

Betty couldn't look at all. It made her cold to even think of the danger. The trained bull that fired off a pistol astonished them both. "Don't it beat all!" Cyrus exclaimed.

"I wonder if the man who trains him is kind or cruel," murmured Betty.

Finally there was a brief pause. A man stumbled out into the ring, dressed as a tramp, and simulating intoxication. Cyrus was disgusted.

"They ought to put him out. He's hurting the show."

At once the tramp began to appeal to the ringmaster in hoarse whispers. He wanted to ride—he didn't care how. He knew he could beat any fellow in the circus, if he just had a chance. The ringmaster tried to put him off by speaking quietly. No use; the tramp was making a veritable nuisance of himself. At last, to the amusement of the audience, the ringmaster invited the tramp to come in and try.

Then there was excitement. Betty was dreadfully uneasy.

"He'll get hurt, Cyrus; I know he'll get hurt."

"Serve him right," returned Cyrus, his eyes following the intoxicated man in an unblinking stare. Even Shoyer was speechless.

After great efforts, assisted by three men,

the tramp got onto the horse. He swayed and promptly lost his balance. He fell continually, while the audience cheered. Suddenly a woman shrieked. Betty looked up; instantly her face flamed. Something was happening to the fellow's clothes. He was looking around, dreadfully embarrassed. Something terrible was sure to be the outcome if they didn't look out, but nobody seemed willing to help the creature. The men howled. Suit by suit this intoxicated tramp was shedding clothes,—trousers, coats, vests, spun through the air. Finally Cyrus, who had been breathing hard, slapped his knee with an exclamation of delight.

"Well, by gum! He fooled me pretty square. He fooled the whole kit of us. Wonder how Shoyer feels now."

Then Betty took courage and looked up. The tramp was a tramp no longer, but a dazzling young man in blue tights, standing easily on the horse's back and making graceful gestures to the roaring audience. How he had fooled every one!

The Warners stayed the show out. Then on account of little Betty they went home

just as the colored lanterns were being strung up around the fairground. It was a great day. The two discussed it in detail.

"Mercy, how I felt when that tramp began to take off his trousers!" said Betty.

Cyrus howled in remembrance. "Wasn't he great! And those women on that high swing—I tell you what, that's dangerous."

"Yes, I couldn't look at all. Oh, Cyrus, it seems almost wicked, doesn't it, for girls to have to risk their lives just to amuse people."

And Cyrus was quite sure it was most unfortunate.

It was after Betty the second passed her tenth birthday that the last payment was made. Cyrus and his wife owned their cottage, owned their yard, owned their well. It was all their own. Only years of close saving, hard work and deprivations had made this possible. That they had gotten happiness and contentment out of those same years did not lessen the fact of their toil. Between times they together had fixed up their home and had made a pretty place of it.

The cottage in its immaculate white and green was Cyrus' pride. He painted it every

second year with great care. Betty had trained vines and creepers up the front. On the side was a rose-bed, and winding above the kitchen windows were purple, white and pale-pink Morning Glories. It seemed as though the sun could not leave this cottage. It was shining on all of the windows all of the time. Small wonder that the girl Betty outgrew all her clothes and that both she and her mother sang perpetually. Sometimes by dint of a special economy they were able to add to their rather scant stock of furniture—a rocking-chair, a book-case, once a rug.

Cyrus' only regret in all these years was his loss of Kirby. A few months after the Warners had left the factory Kirby had been discharged. His temper was fearful when no one was near to help him check it. He wrote Cyrus that he was going to devote himself entirely to speechmaking; Ida advised it. He felt himself that he was cut out for the work. He was not always going to be bound like a slave—not he. Also, he had moved away from the tenement; it was too dull there without Cy. But he forgot to give his friend his new address. Cyrus consulted Betty; she ad-

vised his writing an answer to the letter, sending it to the tenement; but he received no reply, and Kirby was not heard from again. There always lurked in Cyrus' mind an affectionate remembrance of the fiery tongued orator. Probably it was heightened by the stupendous fact that Kirby had manipulated the introduction between himself and Betty the demure.

Time passed. The well paid, enough for a comfortable living and something sent to the bank at the beginning of each July and each January. Cyrus settled down into a kind of premature old-manship. Betty the demure, pretty and dainty as ever, worked and sang.

Betty the second, taller than her mother and quite as pretty, was becoming wayward. She adored lovely dresses and was quite contented not to work. Sometimes she tossed her head and made eyes. These were fascinating tricks in her father's sight, but the mother looked grave and a bit of uneasiness cast its first shadow over her married life.

It was on the second of August that an important fact of news ran through the town on a wave of excitement. It sped on, flying

from tongue to tongue. Finally it reached the cottage. A private car, with an engine engaged especially to pull it, had come into the station. Mr. Fellows—Anthony J. Fellows—had arrived to look their village over.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was astounding. Cyrus came into the kitchen and delivered the gossip to Betty. Betty the second was there listening. She clapped her hands and jumped up and down.

"Take me to see it, father! Oh, a car, all by himself! Think of it! My, my! How I would like it! Does it take a million dollars, father, to have a train all your own? Oh! Oh!"

Cyrus yielded; he always yielded; so Betty ran to get into another dress. Before she appeared again, another bomb was dropped in camp; Mr. Fellows sent word by a villager (had given him fifty cents to deliver the message) that he would be obliged if Mr. Warner would call at his car, "to talk business."

Cyrus was terribly troubled on the instant. His wife was correspondingly proud. "You see, dear, he has heard of your success."

She helped him with clean linen; she put

him into his best suit. Betty, the child, by this time was dancing with excitement.

"Take me, father, oh, do; oh, do. You know I never saw such a thing. And to go inside—oh, father!"

"Leave your father alone, Betty."

"Mother, please let me go."

"Yes, I'll take the child. Am I all right, Betty? Which hat shall I wear? What do you suppose he wants—eh? Shall I just talk right out as though I was rich too?"

Betty encouraged. She told him how capable he was, and that he was not to be at all embarrassed. By the time the two were off the mother sat down exhausted. She waved to her daughter from the porch, thinking how like an exquisite flower the child looked in her thin, pink dimity and her hair blowing curly and loose about her face. Her big pink hat was just a bit awry. She jumped and skipped, keeping tight hold of Cyrus' great hand. The mother did not rejoice in the child's attractiveness. It was too great; too dangerously great. Perhaps the maternal instinct sensed danger. One cannot explain

a mother's heart; it has a sixth sense and it warns ahead of time.

Mr. Fellows saw Cyrus on the station platform at once. He arose and went himself to the door. Cyrus, still leading Betty, stepped up awkwardly. In his left hand he held his big straw hat.

"Come in. Come in, Mr. Warner. Hot day. My man will bring us a glass of something. Your daughter? What a charmingly pretty girl."

Cyrus was dumb; he tried to speak; the result was an unintelligible mutter. He had no knowledge of small talk. Preliminaries were a source of immense difficulty.

Mr. Fellow's eye-glasses hung on a small cord suspended about his neck. He twirled this incessantly. He was well groomed, clean-shaven, sleek.

Inside the car they seated themselves, Betty pulling herself up delightedly on an elaborate chair, looking everywhere, her eyes sparkling, her fact radiant.

All at once she glanced at a couch at the other end of the room; a man lay stretched out, eyeing her impudently. He was a young

man, very dark, very good looking and very bestial as to countenance. He was dressed in wonderful garments. Betty stared hard. What a beautiful being this was, and what clothes! There were jewels on him too. Rings on his long white fingers, and his scarf was held in place by an emerald snake that did not seem like a pin at all, but glittered and gleamed and threw back every reflection of light like some live thing.

Cyrus had paid no heed to this individual; he was in a very trying position. Mr. Fellows repeatedly offered him things to drink that he did not want, and to refuse politely was a problem. The man of money had a slippery way of speaking; words glided from his mouth without the least effort. Cyrus wondered at this, vaguely wishing he had possession of the same gift.

Fellows straightened up; he was ready to introduce the subject in hand. He spoke of oil wells, and their products, and the future for oil. At last Cyrus felt himself on solid earth. He began to talk, telling all about his property; his pride in it was very apparent; also, he was remembering Betty's in-

structions. The elegant young man rose listlessly, wearied by inaction and amused at this pretty child's open-eyed admiration. By the time Cyrus was fairly getting into his subject Teddy Fellows was leaning over very close to Betty, talking to her in a way she had never been talked to before.

Her face flushed, her lips parted in an uncertain smile, and she was a little breathless. He told her wonderful things, all accomplished through the agency—Money. He showed her beautiful things—all bought with money. He intimated at greater possibilities even than he had spoken of, in money. He feasted her upon the marvels of wealth, of which he possessed a large share. All the time he talked with languid airs, taking no pains to conceal what he thought of her and using flattery with lavish freedom. Betty was spellbound.

"If you are as beautiful two years from now as you are today, Betty, there is no reason why you shouldn't have money to use," he began after a moment's reflection, his eyes never traveling from her face.

"How?" she exclaimed, trembling with ex-

citement. It was almost her first speech since she had seen this being.

But he only laughed; her innocence was delicious. "You will think of me sometimes, won't you, Betty?" he asked.

Before the child could reply, Cyrus arose: he too was flushed, and he looked very positive; he and Fellows had clashed.

"Think it over, Mr. Warner. Of course, it's merely a proposition. It's my advice to you to take my offer; for your own good, you understand. Personally it is nothing to me; remember that, my friend." They were Mr. Fellow's parting words, and he was twirling the cord fearfully. He bowed Cyrus and Betty out of the car with considerable ceremony, and the two started homeward, Cyrus still ignorant of his daughter's entertainment by that other man.

They walked rapidly and silently, both father and daughter busy with a multitude of thoughts—disastrous thoughts, too. It was remarkable to watch the effect that visit had made upon these two.

The woman in Betty had suddenly leaped to the front. A powerful something stirring

in her and binding her to this stranger. She was ashamed of the very thoughts that were coursing through her brain, as uncontrollable as the winds of Heaven. It was as if her undoing had already begun.

Betty the demure was waiting for them. Directly she saw them she sent the little girl away to change her gown. The wife had only to look at her husband to know that something had roused and perplexed him to an extraordinary extent. His face was white and drawn.

"What is it, dear?" she asked, going to him and putting both arms about his neck.

It burst out in a torrent: "He wants me to sell—our well—our home here, that's been so much." The man choked; he buried his face in his hands.

For once even Betty was stupefied.

"What do you mean, Cyrus?" she cried, aghast with the thoughts that rushed in upon her.

"Why, you see, he's got oil wells, and he wants more. He's heard of our property here. Every one knows that the well is good," proudly. "But I told him I could not sell;

that it was my home, my business, my living—why, it's my whole life. He can't force me to sell, and I won't sell. By God, I won't."

A reaction was coming over the gentle Cyrus. That instinct of the father to protect his own; the instinct that makes beasts of men when the necessity forces.

"Of course he can't force you; don't worry, dear. It's not possible to take your property away from you if you are not willing to sell. He simply knows it's good, and naturally is interested, being a business man. But that's all. Don't worry, dear; it's all right."

But though she soothed and encouraged and took the burden from her husband, somewhere deep in her heart Betty had a fearful shrinking. If the man was determined, what might he not do with money?

Together they wrote a letter to Fellows that night. Cyrus was stubborn on the point that he would not see the capitalist again. Not for all the money in the universe. They could only work at cross-purposes; besides, he disliked him. What was the use of another visit? In the letter they jointly declined

to sell their well and their property to Mr. Fellows.

"He offered me what I paid Fisher for it, Betty; but the price ain't the question," Cyrus had acknowledged, as if in justice to Fellows.

Betty nodded; she understood only too well that the money was not all. The letter was dispatched. The next afternoon Mr. Fellows and Teddy and the private car, with the special engine, sped away. But for weeks after that visit Betty lay awake all through the hours of the night, staring, wondering, fearing; and Betty the second was restless, and Cyrus, unlike himself, worked without whistling and writhed in his dreams. The news soon spread that all the well-owners had been interviewed, and all except two had refused to sell. Then it was whispered that Fellows had left, vowing vengeance against the blockheads. Half the town was waiting and wondering and despairing, as Cyrus and Betty were. What would be the next move?

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT this time Kirby and Ida Fisher married. The wedding was to have been a quiet affair; at the last minute, however, all this was changed. A friend of Kirby's, also the friend of a theatrical manager, who had a show running in town—a melodrama bristling with battles. murders and sudden deaths—had worked up a great scheme. He approached the orator with it. Instead of having the orator's marriage take place in the parlor at the minister's, it should be performed on the stage, after the show. It would work up in great shape. Bridesmaids, best man and groomsmen could be drawn from the company. The theater orchestra would furnish appropriate musical selections. The audience would witness the affair from the theater; afterward an impromptu reception, held on the stage, would give each and every one a chance to offer congratulations, and shake hands with the bridal couple. It would be an event calculated to live in the

memory a lifetime—an historical occurrence to hand down to one's grandchildren generation after generation.

The prospect pleased Kirby beyond words. The whole arrangement was so in harmony with his dream of the future. There was no doubt about it, it would catch the public. Immediately he saw himself up there, a noble figure standing sublimely before a huge audience, stilled with admiration and awe. He was willing to let them become a part of the most serious drama in his life. Willing because he had sacrificed his life to the masses.

Kirby's nerves and emotions were always on a strained condition of exultation. Now he could hardly speak. He clapped his friend on the shoulder, holding him at arm's length.

"All right! It's all right. If I can fix Ida, why—I'm willing to see the thing through——" He could get no farther.

Ida's eyes grew frightened when Kirby explained the idea, but she had no chance to demur. The fact was Kirby always dominated her with his rapid phrases of intense feeling.

Their consent once given, the management

lost no time. The city flamed with the announcements of a wedding on the stage, with real ministers and real people, all for the one price of admission. There was an article about the affair in the morning dailies. Even Kirby's picture was in the paper.

Meanwhile the orator had been presented to the professionals who were to be his assistants. During the introduction he stood erect, impassive, gazing with a stare of fixed attention. He regarded these men and women as a general who before some decisive battle selects aides from his staff.

After they had all shaken hands, Kirby decided on the villain to do the part of best man. His carriage and hauteur entitled him to this. The leading lady would assist Ida. The first old man, a fresh young fellow, with very pink cheeks, was to give the bride away. Kirby requested him to keep on the melodrama make-up during the ceremony. There was something so inadequate about a youth playing the part of the father without snowy hair and wrinkles. The leading man and the ingenue would fill out the active members of

the bridal party. Kirby communicated these arrangements to Ida.

The great day arrived. At a quarter before eight o'clock in the evening the management sent a carriage for the bride and groom elect. It had been decided that the couple were to drive to the theater and witness the performance from one of the boxes. Ida was in a state of nervous tension, bordering on a collapse, fearful of facing that multitude of people.

Kirby, as became a man of the world, accepted the situation with great complacency. He felt that he had been called upon to play a part—a part that was to launch him into a public life, and the importance of every move was apparent.

The manager met the two at the theater entrance. The men shook hands with much eclat. Kirby presented Miss Fisher, and the three moved on, the orator with Ida clinging to his arm. Their entrance into the box was martial. Kirby was prepared, had the audience demanded, not only to bow an acknowledgement of the greeting, but to make a few remarks. He would begin on matrimony as a

noble institution. This would be followed by a statement of his pride in appearing before such a distinguished gathering of men and women. He would finish with a graceful expression of his thanks and Miss Fisher's for the kindly interest that had been extended to them by the audience.

But the audience was engrossed in the play. The stage was darkened; the villain, in hideous mustache and a long, black cape, was planning fearful complications for the heroine.

Ida and Kirby seated themselves unobserved. Miss Fisher gave a trembling breath of relief and huddled down to make herself smaller. Kirby, arms folded, brows contracted, erect, impassive, nonchalant, pulled his chair closer to the stage. Occasionally he turned and glanced at the rows of seats. Not a vacant space to be seen; the house was packed to the doors. Rows of heads everywhere; tier after tier of men and women here to see him. To witness his marriage to Ida. Even the orchestra had disappeared under the stage, and lines of chairs filled the space. It was an entrancing vision. He felt very noble and heroic.

Ida knew very little of what was going on anywhere about her. She was wishing from the depths of her heart that the evening were safely over. Kirby might be cut out for this sort of thing, but not she. Finally the moment arrived. The villain had been baffled; the first old man was blessing the weeping heroine; the hero, supporting first old lady, was giving voice to noble platitudes; the ingenue pirouetted all over the stage, stopping occasionally to snap a long wad of gum in full view of the audience.

As the curtain fell in a storm of approval the manager appeared at the back of the box.

"Now is the time," he whispered hoarsely. Ida started guiltily. Kirby, grandly grave, stepped out royally. The scene-shifters were hurrying around, making appropriate settings for the wedding. All the actors, except the leading lady and the first old man were in the dressing rooms, taking off paint, powder and superfluous hair; the men putting on evening dress, sticking huge white chrysanthemums in their left buttonholes. The ingenue was making an elaborate toilet.

The orchestra came up on to the stage. The

leader, a fat little German, arranged his musicians into groups in the wings; and stationed himself where he could watch the ceremony. An altar was placed down middle center, with great effect. During these changes the audience outside became impatient; cat calls, crys and remarks came back to the actors. There were shouts of Kirby's name, followed by "speech." Kirby heard it distinctly.

All at once everything was ready. The minister took his place back of the altar; in his hands he held a prayer-book. Before him and directly in middle center was Kirby, elegant in a rented dress suit that fitted only in spots. His hair was brushed straight back. At his right stood Ida, fearfully pale, clutching hysterically at a bouquet that had been placed in her hands. Grouped around these two were the villain, minus his mustache; the leading lady and the first old man. Just back of this circle were the ingenue in long skirts and without the gum, and the leading man. Artificial flowers, unnatural hand-made palms and green moss-covered banks were everywhere on the stage.

The manager gave the signal. The orches-

tra leader raised his baton. The musicians broke into the wedding march; the curtain swung up.

The audience fell into a sudden quiet, leaning forward, straining its ears to catch the sound of the service. The orchestra was playing pianissimo, but the music was louder than Ida's trembling responses. Kirby's tones rang out clear, important. At the prayer the minister spread out his hands and arms so as to include everyone. Then all on the stage knelt. The professionals went through the manoeuvre with the precision of their calling. The leading lady swept down, her dress falling in even folds. She was weeping beautifully. The villain was a cloud of gloom. The leading man posed, his eyes rolled heavenward. First old man entered so completely into his part that he forgot his youth and raised a trembling hand to his forehead. His mouth was quivering.

In less than five minutes it was all over. The orchestra thundered into a triumphal march, and the manager stepped into view to offer congratulations. The leading lady still tremendously affected, kissed Ida. The vil-

lain and Kirby wrung each other's hands, both in a state of heroics. A clamor was rising out in front. The audience remembering the placards, demanded that the announcements should be carried out to the letter. It wanted its money's worth. A reception had been promised, hadn't it?

The manager superintended everything. First he made a little speech that was wildly applauded. Then the rush began. Men and women crowded about Mr. and Mrs. Kirby. For over an hour, a sea of people surged to the front, shaking hands, laughing, chattering, trying to think what to say.

Kirby was very superior. He accepted the good wishes majestically, and introduced Mrs. Kirby, sometimes with large commanding gestures; again by an elegant inclination of his head. Occasionally she leaned closer to speak to him. At once his whole attitude became deferential. Ida was smiling and looking very happy. She was recovering from her nervousness. All this time the orchestra was lending its efforts towards a successful completion of the evening. One could not

hear a word his neighbor said above the lamentations of the horns and drums.

Presently the theatre began to empty. The rows of seats grew dark and lonesome. An usher began to close the chairs, banging them noisily. Two scrub women stood back in the foyer with pails and mops, waiting for a chance to begin work. And Ida, very tired, very anxious to have it all over with, gave a sigh of contentment as the last couple passed.

It had been a great evening; a most successful affair, and on the whole it had passed more agreeably than she had dared to hope. People had been so kind.

Kirby and Ida drove home through the quiet streets, the city looking big and unnatural in its desertion. Ida slipped her hand into her husband's.

"We ought to be happy, if good wishes count," she said shyly.

After this partnership, as Kirby called his marriage to Ida, the orator conceived the idea of editing a paper. A paper dealing with the woes of the down-trodden laboring class —the bulwarks of the nation. In each issue there would be a fierce article on the vices,

deceptions, and cruelties of capitalists—an article that showed them up. He would give to the world a paper that feared nothing, asked nothing and spoke the truth. Also in each issue Ida would conduct a German column devoted to practically the same kind of work; calling on the poor to arise and assert themselves, make America free in truth, as it was in name.

Kirby was willing and ready to back his tirades with his life. Like all fanatics he dedicated his life to any cause that arose. But no two ways about it, he was gaining a kind of influence among a certain class of people. His bellowings and flow of lurid phrases appealed to the uneducated who could not follow an argument. Those who could not work because they would not, adhered to him assiduously. Their praise unfitted Kirby for all usefulness. He became involved in fearful statements and yelled himself free of them. He discussed the social problem wildly and glared defiance. Let anyone come on who would and disprove.

He banged, and howled, and worked himself into a high pitch of frenzy through his

own clamor. His audience unfailingly caught his excitement, and howled applause and approval at him. After his speech they would all rise and shake their fists into the faces of their neighbors, asserting the orator's brilliancy; with monster oaths they cursed the tyranny which held them down; they blasphemed the monied interests of the country and pledged themselves to a gory badge of freedom.

"When the time was ripe the capitalists would see how they could struggle. Oh, it was a crew for a government to tremble at. Just wait, they weren't started yet, but when they were Uncle Sam had better look out. In time they would run the policy of the United States; put up their own President."

Here there was a pause, while wild eyes traveled towards Kirby. He was their leader now, a fearless man of great strength. Well, perhaps—who could say what he might be when they ruled the government.

During this pause Kirby assumed a terribly unconscious pose;—placing one hand behind him, the other between the buttons of his coat; all the time his blood was coursing

riotously through his veins. Ah, he was a leader of men; some day his name would be known from one end of the universe to the other.

But being a leader of men and an editor of a paper did not bring in vast sums upon which to manage his family. Kirby borrowed freely, and with large faith in himself. He did not trouble himself with quick payments of his debts. But even this method of obtaining money left him wretchedly poor most of the time. The poorer he got the more rampant he became. He often thought of Cyrus, sometimes with a notion of writing to him, for help. He put it aside, however, too loyal to his friend to burden him. Still, his continued ill-luck and his persistent poverty exasperated him. He began to drink excessively. After one of these debauches his talk was something fearful. His brain flamed with the heat of whiskey, and even men of his own stamp feared him. He was a beast, a raging, roaring, irresponsible, dangerous animal.

Meanwhile Ida had given birth to a sickly, pinch-faced boy with eyes as haunted as her

own. The father regarded him as another bulwark of society, and planned a flaming future for the tiny mite.

In her half-starved condition the mother lay week after week, too ill to move, too wretched to be conscious of the neglect and want that besieged them. The rooms where the Kirbys lived were abominably dirty; they reeked with filth and foul odors. Small wonder that the baby moaned and wailed. What had it come into, anyway? What was this world?

Kirby was seldom home. He arrived late at night, bringing with him a heavy smell of alcohol and stale tobacco smoke. He was unkempt, a week's growth of black beard darkened his face. His clothes were frayed and ragged. He was never brutal to Ida, even in his drunken rages, but he was sullen, useless and lazy. What was the use anyway; no sense in trying as long as monopolists had their way. Wait until things began to come HIS way, just once; then he'd alter his life. There would be a revolution of his planning and leading, when the time was ripe. Finish with that, then he and Ida would live in a

house, by God, and a swell house. He was working to that end, but it required time. Just let him control. Let the bulwarks of the nation be in his guarding and see.

He would roar this out at his wife repeatedly, making the scant furniture rattle with his gesticulations. The boy woke in a fright at the noise and moaned pitifully. Ida quivered, weary with the heaviness of her husband's tones. Sometimes she cried from sheer weakness and despair; then Kirby's face would become mottled with rage and he would swear horribly at the state of things.

Far away in the southern part of the State Cyrus was wretched too, for things in the little cottage were going badly, very badly. Fellows,—Anthony J. Fellows—was having his revenge. This man counted his money by millions, but that was not the issue. He wanted these oil-wells that he could not buy. The fact of resistance made his more determined. He would have them. He would show those duffers, those country Bills what he and his money could accomplish; and that they could not bulldoze him out of what he wanted.

He sat apart in his suite of offices and planned the calamity. When he was ready, by a word he sent down the price of oil. It went with a crash. It was a matter of no concern to him how far the price tumbled. Ruin could not beset him. In the end he had to gain. Millions backed him, hundreds backed his opponents—not opponents but victims; there was no question of opposition in the matter. The news came like a clap of thunder in that little village. Those small producers were paralyzed. Oil went off two and three cents at a time. The market was in pieces.

Cyrus became old in a week. He said nothing, because it was not his way to complain; but he understood his helplessness. Long ago Kirby had warned him against rich men; Kirby had been right, far-seeing. He had spoken truly. There was nothing exaggerated in those harangues. Theories of life were absurd.

Cyrus worked. He did it out of force of habit; also because he loved every inch of his ground; but he was stunned, bewildered,

and he dared not stop to think ahead a minute. The injustice of it was appalling.

"I won't quit; and we ain't paupers yet," he would cry with deep desperation in every tone; and Betty always acquiesced.

They never heard again directly from Fellows; but that was quite unnecessary; he had put oil so low that none of the small men could sell. He did not need to be heard from further.

After a few months the Warners began to draw some money from their little store in the savings bank. They were deprived of their only source of income—they had to live. Betty cried over this. She showed no sorrow before Cyrus—in fact she was merry and bright when he was anywhere near, but by herself she wept and prayed.

In the deepness of her grieving over Cyrus and her home, and what was coming, she lost sight of her daughter; otherwise she would not only have noticed, she would have been startled at what she saw in little Betty's face.

The child drooped. She was silent, and subdued, and started guiltily when anyone addressed her suddenly. She did not sleep.

She ate so little that sometimes she grew faint from very want of sustenance. She had fallen into the habit of taking long walks by herself. Anywhere to get away. Sometimes it was through the fields, occasionally down the broad country road that led on and on indefinitely; but more often it was to the woods. Here Betty would sit down in the very thick of the trees and think and think. She came so close to Teddy in her thoughts that it would not have surprised her any moment if he had appeared. It was wonderful the unreasonable influence that one meeting had exerted over her.

Betty staid away from home as long as she dared; sitting motionless hour after hour; watching nothing, doing nothing—only thinking. This solitude had become a passion with the child. It was taking her a long time to become accustomed to that other self in her. It had awakened with such suddenness the girl was terrified. Until that meeting with Teddy there had been nothing like this in her whole being; no thought of anyone or anything beyond her father and mother. Her life had been tranquil and sufficient.

But this disturbance that had come swift and strong had changed it all. It had caught her and held her fast and was claiming not only recognition but her entire attention. She couldn't escape it. Moreover, the girl was assailed from a thousand different points. Sometimes she was tortured and racked and ashamed, yet all the while, beneath the pain there was a strange element of joy that was like nothing she had ever experienced before. She would cry with anger at her perplexity at the same time would thrill under gusts of such intense emotion that she shivered and drew her body together.

Why had all this come to her anyway? She did not know herself at all. Everything was so unexpected. She wanted nothing of this kind. Certainly she had not sought it. Who could have guessed that the meeting with Teddy would have involved any such crisis as this. It took away half of the enjoyment of the thing.

If she could have chosen, Betty would have shunned every part of existence but the pleasant part. But somehow she found all

at once that in this matter her desire had small voice.

There was one gleam of comfort. This lay in the knowledge that Teddy was remembering too. His remembrance took the form of letters that came with great regularity on certain days of every week. He pledged this little girl to secrecy and warned her of the days when his letters were to arrive.

They came promptly—smooth, insinuating, contemptible things, but as she read the child trembled from a something that left her cold and near to tears. It was a wonderful happiness, a happiness very akin to fear. It was the further awakening of that mysterious womanhood.

He loved her; he said so—she never read that without quivering. Down in the bottom of a little box made of her favorite sweet grass, these precious bits of paper were smoothed away one by one. By degrees the paper took on the scent of the perfume and that delighted her. There came a time later when the smell of this same grass made Betty clench her hands and dig her nails into her flesh.

Long after her mother and father were in bed she took those letters out of their hiding place when she was sure the others slept. She would gloat over them with miserly rapture. She would press the inanimate things to her soft, white cheek. "Oh, how sweet they are!" she murmured. Sometimes she kissed them.

CHAPTER IX.

CYRUS WARNER had passed his fortieth birthday. It meant that for forty years this man had spent his strength and his time and his constitution in fighting starvation and nakedness. It was as if for thirty of these years he had been chained to a wall, to gain ten of freedom, afterward to be recaptured and put back at the beginning again. For the grind had begun all over. Cyrus' ambition, the oil-well and the cottage, were things of the past. He had kept up the fight stubbornly until every cent from the savings bank had been drawn, and still Fellows sent the price of oil pushing down.

Then he and Betty talked it over. Her voice trembled in spite of all her resolves to be brave. Cyrus sat staring stupidly out across his beautiful lawn.

"I never asked for much; not more than seemed my share—I wasn't a hog. Where's the justice of what's happened?" he asked. But Betty could not tell him, and there was

only one thing to do; talking really did not help.

"We will go back to the city; it won't be so bad. We will get something, some price, for—our home." Her voice choked. "That will start us, and schools are better there for Betty, you know." Surely there was a gleam of brightness.

For a second it found a reflection in the man's heavy heart. His old worship of an education still burned in him,—dimly, to be sure, but it burned.

"The schools;—yes; that's right; Betty must be a scholar."

"We'd better not try to take all our things back; it costs such a lot."

"Can we sell them?"

But a happier thought struck Betty. "We'll try and rent the cottage furnished. That will bring us a little every month. It'll take care of our things too. Perhaps, you know, some day we'll come back. Furnished cottages like ours are hard to get. We will sell only the well to that man."

Cyrus arose. He drew himself up stiffly to his full height. "Damn that man!" he

said, and his teeth clicked. A moment later his eyes wandered through the parlor into their little bedroom beyond—the room where Betty had been born. His face softened; his eyes blurred. He held out his hand to his wife:—"I didn't mean to, Betty. I have no right to be impatient when you, when you—." He had no words to finish.

She put her arms tight about him:—"Oh, dear, I know, I know."

But renting the cottage and selling the well were not to be done in a minute. Mr. Fellows' secretary, writing for Mr. Fellows, replied to Mr. Warner's letter. He announced that a price had been offered for the well some months previously, but since then the property had depreciated in value. Oil had declined materially. In fact, Mr. Fellows doubted the advisability of adding to his already enormous stretches of oil land. However, he would consider the matter, and if later he decided to alter this present opinion he would communicate with Mr. Warner, naming the amount he was willing to give.

Cyrus read, his eyes extending with the fury that swept over him. He knew it was

a system of robbery; a cold-blooded attack to get his property away. Fellows understood better than anyone what that well was worth. There were no laws to defend Cyrus. Nothing that he could do. No way he could force or protect. He was absolutely helpless; yet he was being hounded and bled.

"It's dreadful, dreadful, dreadful," whispered Betty,—she was reading this damnable note for the sixth time. Somehow she could not understand; yet her eyes would not leave the page.

She was pale to her lips, with all the freshness gone from her face. "It's no use," she moaned; "no use, Cyrus. That man's going to have his way. We might just as well start back now. Leave it all. Thinking of leaving is making me sick. I want to get it over with. Oh, my little home. My dear, dear, little home! I can't stand it! It's just breaking my heart." She gave out now, completely. Leaning her arms against the wall, her curly head buried in them, she sobbed and sobbed.

It was the first time Cyrus had seen her give way like this. He looked at her for a

moment in pitiful bewilderment; then suddenly something roused itself in him, something that never had been touched before. It took possession of him from head to foot, and had in it a savageness that would have led him to commit murder. He paced the room, his face working, his fists doubled hard and red. The expression in his eyes was terrible.

"If that man crosses my path again let him look out—that's all—look out," he growled, his teeth set.

The next day they began to pack; they took what they could afford to ship and what was necessary for fitting up a new home. The case of books, the swinging shelf and the chromos were included. The rest of their things they sold. Betty had at the last minute arranged with a couple who took the cottage for ten dollars a month; but it was to be emptied. This new couple had furniture, and they did not care to be burdened with more.

Cyrus and Betty kept close to each other all the time they packed, seeming to derive some comfort from nearness. They talked very little; both of them had changed won-

derfully in the past few weeks. Little Betty was all excitement. She was everywhere, doing nothing useful, wanting to keep everything of her own. She expressed no sorrow at leaving her home.

Her mother explained this to Cyrus. "Children are all alike. They want change. Betty doesn't know; she doesn't understand."

But it was the mother who was misunderstanding, and because of the sorrow so deep in her heart she secretly resented the child's gayety. It was sacrilege.

When the first intimation had come that they must return to the city, Betty the second had written a childish letter to Teddy. It was full of her parents' goodness and grief, and complaints of his father's cruelty. Teddy's answer had been sentences of rejoicing at the prospect of the future before them:—"The old man is not as black as your father paints him. Dad will do the square thing by your people some day. But don't think of that; think of us, what we've got. No more letters but each other, eh, Betty. How do you like that?—Finding fault? Then you don't love me. I am impatient with counting

the hours 'till you come; you mourn and rage because you are coming. Which loves the best, miss, tell me that."

It was such a dear, beautiful, manly letter —naturally she could not grieve; it would be selfish when Teddy wanted her so; but neither could she explain. However, some day they would know,—father and mother— when they got there, how good and splendid the Fellows were.

The cottage was finally stripped and bare and the good-byes were all said. The three sat miserably on their boxes at the station waiting for the train that was to carry them back into the city. Betty had managed not to break down again, but she was sick and faint with the efforts she had made to keep up. Cyrus in a dumb, broken-hearted way attempted to comfort her. Betty felt this with a great uplifting of spirit—his love was unfailing.

"After all, it does not so much matter as long as we have each other," she whispered to him.

"That's so; that's so," he replied, nodding and brightening at once.

Betty was very excited on the train. It was her first trip away from the very borders of the little country town. She talked very fast and flushed often. Many men in the same car watched her with staring glances of impertinent approval. There was something about the child that was continually drawing men's notice to her.

The marvels of the journey kept her so occupied that at first she was unconscious of this attention. After a little, one man began to walk up and down the car on purposeless errands. Each time he passed her he slowed up and stared. The fourth time this occurred she looked up and met his eyes. She blushed to her ears. Finally, the fellow changed his seat to be nearer. From that minute he regarded her ceaselessly. It was a very extraordinary performance.

The noise and confusion and dirt of the city terrified Betty. She clutched her father's hand when they crossed the streets, and gave little nervous cries at the clanging of the car bells.

"What's the matter, father—is there a fire? Where are we going?—hurry, hurry, mother."

"Hush, Betty."

"We're all right, my girl."

It seemed as though they were to walk forever and no where could they turn to get rid of the crowd.

It took months of city life to accustom the child Betty to that one thing. She abhorred contact with people. She longed for cool, fresh air and the pretty dresses that never soiled. She missed the cottage that was theirs alone, and wilted under the work that her mother from necessity put upon her. The truth was Betty the demure was seeing ahead and beginning the practice of economy. She knew that the time was not far distant when she, like Cyrus, would have to take up the grind again. Then the housework would fall upon the daughter. The child was old enough to help; she must help.

Cyrus evaded this time; he shrank from it horribly; the thought of Betty, his wife, the woman he had promised to protect, taking upon herself the burden of a bread-winner was a perpetual torment.

But misfortunes once encountered hound you. You cannot escape them. The War-

ners were no exception. Cyrus had gone at once to his old camping ground—the factory. He had never questioned the possibility of obtaining employment here. It would not have surprised him to have received the offer of his old position.

When he came in sight of the building he saw it had been improved; it was taller, newer looking. He presented himself at the office. This part still bore sufficient resemblance to the old one to breathe a certain air of familiarity.

Once inside the door this familiarity was swept away; the difference was appalling. Not one face that he knew. He stood looking about him from one to another, awkward,—embarrassed; turning his hat in his hand like a bashful child. He knew by instinct before he had opened his lips that all his hopes for a position here were doomed to disappointment. The man asked for work, mechanically, and when it was refused he departed at once, still acting automatically. As he left the building it commenced to rain—a cold, dreary drizzle, that soaked him to the skin and made him shiver violently. It was a long way to

his home, and he had to walk it—every step of the distance. By the time he reached there he was in a chill; his teeth chattering so that talk was impossible.

Betty took off his dripping clothes, and helped him to bed, after he had soaked his feet. During this process he had sat on the edge of the bed, wrapped like an Indian in a big blanket, while the beads of perspiration poured out all on his forehead. He recounted his experience to his wife, after he lay down, and while he was noisily sipping a "hot sling."

Betty's prompt action probably saved Cyrus from a heavy illness, but for three days he was wretched. He could not drag himself through the streets to look for employment. This enforced idleness was telling severely on the Warner finances. Some means of livelihood was imperative. They were depriving themselves of everything except the absolute necessities; and it was a question how these were to be purchased if something did not turn up.

As soon as he was well, every morning Cyrus went out early. He spent entire

days looking and asking for work; he would have taken anything; but ill success followed the man. Night after night he returned crestfallen and wretchedly unhappy. What would be the end? At last, Betty joined in the search; she went into the hunt desperately, fully alive to the fact that years of housework had practically unfitted her for a position as stenographer. Her only hope lay in her willingness to work for small wages until she got into practice again.

This left little Betty alone—Little Betty?—she was nearly fifteen, but looked much older, was taller than her mother, and strong with the strength of her free, active outdoor life.

She had seen Teddy many times since they had come to the city—stolen visits all of them, but delicious. He was so dear, so courteous and thoughtful. His inquiries for her father and mother showed his concern for their welfare. He did not approve his own father's course, he said so frankly. That was something.

But even this nearness to Teddy did not altogether make up for the wretchedness of the life the girl had come into. Betty was an aris-

tocrat from the top of her head to the soles of her dainty feet. She loathed work; she abominated poverty. Even Teddy found it hard to smooth the pathway. She watched her hands and wept at the change in their appearance; her nice dresses were past all cleaning—she despised living in three rooms.

Teddy had not yet arrived at a point where he considered it wise to offer money; nevertheless, he could draw a clear picture of the future from the outline already presented to view; so he waited and made himself irresistible.

Finally, by the greatest of good luck, Cyrus got a job. It was in a harvesting plant, and his wages were not large. But they were something. He hailed this change with a profound joy. Betty cried.

"We will have luck after a little, dear; don't be unhappy."

"Mother," put in Betty the second, "must I clean and wash? Can't we get someone to help? Look at my hands; they are all red and horrid. I won't be a servant."

A report from a pistol could not have shocked Betty and Cyrus more intensely than

distress from this source. Neither one spoke. Mrs. Warner looked across to where the child sat; looked keenly at the discontented face, beautiful for all the lines that this discontentment had drawn into it. Suddenly, she awakened to the danger. What had come had been so gradual that the abruptness of its first announcement startled the mother. Now she knew.

"Cyrus, we have made a mistake," she said, turning her troubled eyes from her daughter to her husband.

"Oh, I guess not, I guess not; it is hard on her, Betty."

The father would not see; no man can until too late. That was all, then. They spoke no more. Betty, a little shame-faced, went to bed. But, Betty the demure remembered, and worried, and had few easy moments.

CHAPTER X.

CYRUS had been at the "works" a month when he suddenly ran into Kirby. The orator was carried away with enthusiasm immediately. What in the world did this mean?—Cy. here in town. They shook hands, gripping fiercely.

"By God, what's this, eh? Back to buy goods?—or, are you painting the town? Where did you fall from?—holiday?"

Cyrus was disturbed at once! he disliked above everything to confess his bad fortune.

"Where are you going?" he asked, to gain time.

"Where are you going?"

"Home," said Cyrus, not thinking.

"Eh! what! home! You don't mean you've come back here to live, do you?"

Of course it was all out. Really, Cyrus had no hope of concealing the state of things for very long, anyway. He laughed mirthlessly. "Yes, I've sold out, or rather I've stopped my well. I want to sell out."

"No good?" Kirby had fallen in step with Cyrus; the two were walking briskly.

"Yes, too good; that's the whole trouble; it was too good." The tone Cyrus used was unpleasant.

"A brush with the capitalists?"

"Yes, damn them!" yelled Cyrus.

Kirby rolled his great eyes towards his friend. "On the level, Cy, is that true? Did they shove you?"

Kirby was entirely in his element, but also for the moment nonplussed; it was incredible; he talked against the monied men because it was his trade; he never believed half he accused them of. But here was a clear case. He talked on glibly. He could always talk, nevertheless his mind was confused. By the time his thoughts had readjusted themselves, Cyrus was telling him the whole wretched business, flinging the words out between breaks and pauses. Instinctively, Kirby flamed with the fury of his hobby.

"Tricked you, by God!" he cried during one of these pauses; his voice sounded as though a fight were imminent. Inadvertently some of the passers-by stopped and stared and

waited to see the fun. But the couple passed on amicably, jostled and pushed by the crowds and unconscious of the commotion they caused.

"I can't sell my well; I can't sell my oil; I can't live in my home. It's a gol darn imposition, Kirby."

"It's a crime—a crime—not only against you, but against the bulwarks of a free and independent nation. What ruined Rome? Eh, do you know? Well, it was because three men had all the cash. Three men. What's threatening the prosperity of our country? The same thing. The money getting away from the masses into the control of a few, a few hogs always grunting for more. It's got to be stopped. It will be stopped! There'll be hell to pay; but it'll be stopped." Kirby gesticulated wildly.

Cyrus had listened to this tirade many times; but never with the same intense interest. It had a meaning now, a personal meaning that had never before been evident. He was no longer puzzled. From hard, practical experience he understood what sermons

could never have taught him; moreover, he liked to listen.

He took Kirby to his three rooms, forgetting to be ashamed of their very apparent poverty. Once there he attempted himself to talk on the subject of Capital and Labor, to assist Kirby's arguments. He made a poor showing; but it revealed the man's immense feeling that he put forward the attempt. Finally he realized his inability. After that he confined himself to nods of the head and let Kirby go on with all the talking.

Betty sat at one side sewing and listening. The noise and the repetition worried her; Kirby was so fierce. Beside this, she felt that his talk was not for the best. A disturbing element of such a radical sort is never wise. It was bound to bring dangerous complications, fearful results. Yet she was too sensible to interfere.

Cyrus, sitting stiffly in his chair, finally struck a keynote without realizing it.

"How are you goin' to change it? That's the point. You haven't any power. Neither have I. We haven't even the law with us. It

ain't our fault, but how are we going to help it?"

"I'll tell you how. I'll tell you just how!" shouted Kirby, never more furiously excited. "Revolution; that's the means. A bloody revolution. We are not so helpless as you think. We're waiting for numbers, and we've not so long to wait either. We've most enough; then we'll out with it. We'll unite and start out by blowing up things. We can fix the law. We'll teach this whole government such a lesson as it never got before. We'll show 'em up at Washington that they can't run the whole country to please two or three blooming trust companies. You wait; you just wait; there's revenge coming your way all right. It will be blood and war, but the more of it the better. Blood! Red! Hot! Rich! The blood of those God-damn capitalists!" The brute in him was loosed; his tirades had aroused in him an evil mania; it was fast becoming a veritable obsession. At that moment he was capable of anything.

"What right have they to starve us, eh? What right have they to grind us down to

such poverty as this?" throwing his arms in a sweeping gesture around the room.

Cyrus winced.

"Ain't we human? Haven't our wives and children feelings, as well as theirs? Because they have millions where we have cents, is that any reason why they need to take all we have. I tell you we have got to show them; and that will be done by killing. I am ready to begin right now."

Betty the demure arose. This thing had gone as far as she cared to have it.

"How is Ida?" she said.

It took Kirby two or three seconds to reverse his thoughts. His eyes winked stupidly. Then he talked about his wife and boy. He was lofty; referred to his apartments and his wife's devotion to housework. But Betty reading the unspoken truth from the flow of spoken sentences guessed at their condition.

After Kirby had departed Betty said to Cyrus: "I believe they are dreadfully poor. That man's ideas may be all right, but they won't buy bread and meat. If he worked half as much as he talked he would be richer.

I am going over to see Ida. Her eyes always did predict a mournful life."

"But there's a lot in what he says, Betty; something's wrong somewhere, sure. He comes near to hitting it," Cyrus remarked.

* * * * * *

A man's greatest devotion to a woman comes when he is not sure of her. Teddy began to have Betty Warner on his mind. He had looked for an easy conquest, an amusing affair with an exceedingly young and an unusually pretty country girl. In fact it had looked so simple and so easy that he was not more than half interested. But, with the turn of their fortunes Betty proved to be not so simple. She was furious at her position; she was ashamed of it and humiliated, and she vented her feelings on Teddy in strange and varied forms, all strictly feminine.

She began by extreme indifference. He found himself continually wondering if she actually felt as unconcerned as she acted. He wondered about it so much that he suddenly discovered that this girl was seldom out of his mind. This angered the elegant Teddy; he retaliated by indifference. At this, Betty

told him with supreme contempt that he bored her, also that she thought they had seen each other a sufficient number of times. She liked to be amused. He was stupid beyond all endurance.

Teddy gasped. The girl was evidently so sincere that he swore under his breath, promptly losing all semblance of not caring. He strove mightily to please. All he said and all he did was unavailing.

"How absurd you are," she commented, her chin high in the air. "Do you think I have anything but loathing for you and your family. Come to my home and then ask why I do not adore you."

"But I am not to blame," he answered, with an humbleness that was very real. "I am devilish sorry."

"Prove it," she said.

"What shall I do?"

"Tell your father to put back the price of oil, then we can go home and live. LIVE, do you hear! not exist like rats in a hole. Look at me. Look at my hands. Look at my clothes. Oh, it is a marvel, isn't it, that I am not worshipping you on my knees."

"Damn it, you know I can't do that. The old man has got to keep this up. Your father isn't the only one he is after. To put oil up would lose him thousands."

"He has only millions, I believe. You are very tiresome," she sneered.

But Betty did not dwell upon this end of the situation. The truth was she knew how far to go. Her moods varied—going with incredible swiftness from one to another. At one moment she was adorable, the next sarcastic. Sometimes flippant; always interesting.

For the first time in Teddy's career he felt distinctly inadequate; he believed himself put upon and abused. At the same time he struggled somehow to make amends for some in definite thing. His one object resolved itself into getting Betty into an easier condition. When Teddy was away from her he was continually going over their tete-a-tetes in his mind. They made him furious;—furious at himself, furious at her, but he counted the hours until he should see her again. The business was becoming absolutely desperate, intollerable. He was always making resolves to

"show her" the next time they met. But those "showings" never came off. In fact he did not dare sulk with her—it was too uncertain —risky. He really did not know whether she cared for him or not; also by now, he was discovering that in some mysterious and unheard-of fashion he did care. It might have been pique or vanity or hurt pride; he had no desire to analyze, but that girl was on his brain. So he became humble, bowed to Fate and submitted to her rule.

They saw each other on irregular days, but always twice a week. Teddy would drive to the park in great style, sending his trap back by the groom. Then he waited. He smoked innumerable cigarettes and looked incessantly at his watch, furious that he had come so early.

He was getting to be a regular dub, standing around for his girl like some damned workingman. The whole thing was beyond him, anyway; but at least she might be on time.

The longer he waited the madder he grew; galled at the indignity he was suffering. Immediately Betty came in view the young man

subsided. Never by any possible chance did she arrive first at these appointments. Neither by any chance did Teddy complain to her of her tardiness. His meekness was unassailable.

The girl was growing very self-possessed. She had entirely recovered from those quick excitements that were once so much a part of her. Instead, she was as demure as her mother had ever been; but there was this difference: Betty the daughter was conscious of everything she did; Betty the mother, had never known an affectation in all her life.

She received Teddy's greetings with considerable hauteur, and accepted his adulation as her right. She gave nothing, claimed everything, and the young man yielded. The truth was she fascinated him by her complete complacence and her strong personalities. Her airiness was not vulgar, but bewitching. She had a distinct aversion to sitting or walking in the park—it was too much like hired help; so the two generally went to a quiet little German garden, where in the afternoon they were quite by themselves. In the winter time the place was all enclosed and heated by

a huge German stove, that reminded Betty of graves; she did not explain where the resemblance came in; in the summer it was cool and delicious, with shady trees coming up out of a gravel floor.

Betty did not approve of liquor, so Teddy initiated her into the delights of a very harmless drink—he called it a "slo gin fizz." It was nice because it was so very pretty; likewise, the taste was pleasing.

"Like lemonade—something; only better," she asserted.

"It's not as strong as lemonade," he announced, drinking his with a disgusted face.

When Betty chose she made these meetings delightful; on other occasions they were distinct failures. The uncertainty as to which they would be kept Teddy in a nervous anxiety to repeat them. He also learned many things—when to avoid certain subjects; when to introduce others. Money was tabooed; this young man of wealth who had taken a serene enjoyment in bragging of his income and his prospects and his devices for spending a fortune, never dared mention the question now at all. It was wonderful any-

way, what Teddy was doing for this chit of a girl. The more his mind dwelled upon it the keener he became for a time when he could assert himself, and "show her," "just make her dance once to his tune for the variety of the thing." That would come when he was sure of her. He would never be strictly unkind, and of course, never exactly brutal; but she should move to his whims, not he to hers; and once at least he'd make her dance. He would not be continually sacrificed.

He counted his time from the moment he was permitted to kiss her and take her in his arms. That would fix her, and her dance. If she yielded that far she was won. With all Betty's coquettishness she never gave liberties, so after all Teddy had some understanding of some women.

When he was alone the young man gave vent to such thoughts as these, but all the time he was scheming and planning how he could make her fast and sure to him; he had an overpowering desire to possess her.

When it finally fell to him, schemes and

plans had no part in it. It was just sheer chance.

Betty's mother had found work; she went now with Cyrus every morning at seven, taking her lunch with her. It was six when she returned. Betty was left alone to do the work. All the work. All alone.

The first meeting of Betty and Teddy after this calamity had fallen upon the girl opened up miserably; she was sullen and disagreeable, and she never looked prettier than in her rage. Teddy, all at sea, worked and strove; it was no use, she would not be pleased; finally the trouble came out. Teddy listened in silence.

"Are you quite through?" he asked. when her recital of hardship was finished.

"Quite," she snapped.

"Then listen to me. Hereafter a woman will arrive at your place in the morning early, seven-thirty, say; she will do your work, everything. I will pay her. She will cook and scrub and wash and all the rest of the damned business. You will spend the extra time with me. The creature can leave before your people get home."

He leaned over and picked up her hands. He looked at them a second, then he kissed them.

"What a hell of a nuisance, anyway," he remarked vaguely.

Her face was radiant. "You mean it?" she cried, referring to his offer.

"Will you be kind to me if I do?"

Her face darkened. "I sell nothing."

"Oh, God," he ejaculated, angrily, "I am not quibbling."

A moment later she laughed; it was a most delicious laugh. "Teddy, be friends. You are a lamb. I adore you," she said, touching him.

He turned on the instant: a queer expression came into his eyes. "I mean to have you say that in a different tone some day. I intend to make you adore me," he said.

There was no banter in his voice, neither was there anxiety expressed in her self-satisfied countenance.

CHAPTER XI.

THINGS were working admirably. The woman Teddy sent was a treasure. For the first two weeks Betty was in a terror of fear. If something should happen to make her mother and the hired girl meet! But nothing did. When her mother and father were safely off Betty went back to bed. She finished her sleep while the woman clattered and worked and put things in great order. Then at eleven she had hot chocolate and a roll fresh from the baker's served to her in bed. This appeared the extreme of luxury. Teddy paid for it. After that she spent a long time in dressing and trying wonderful arrangements of her hair. At one o'clock she lunched. Every afternoon she spent with Teddy—sometimes driving, sometimes at a matinee, occasionally shopping, but oftener at the little German garden. She always returned home well before six o'clock, to change her gown and finish getting supper. Her mother's praises on what she did were

terrible. The girl accepted them silently with averted face. They were a burden because they brought with them a sense of guilt.

Her father's heavy approval bored her. She was continually comparing him to Teddy. She adored elegant men. Certainly no one could accuse Cyrus of elegance.

This state of things continued for some time—nearly an entire winter; then Cyrus began coming home with many tales to tell of the uneasiness among the men at the "works." It had been coming for months. It had its beginning in a kind of club they were forming. Cyrus was uneasy. They were finding fault with their pay, but this was a mere pretext for something deeper, he believed. Kirby was inciting discontent too; in fact, Kirby was at the bottom of the whole business. He came each morning and distributed copies of his paper to the laborers on their way to work. The articles he wrote were fierce, wild things, senseless too, but they inflamed.

Cyrus was troubled because a strike meant idleness again; perhaps starvation. He was willing to work for any pay; he understood,

however, that this would not be tolerated if a strike was ordered. He was commanded to join the society, but he had refused. The threats that followed his refusal he never allowed his wife to hear. He and Betty talked it over nightly,—both alarmed at the situation. Was it the beginning of another end?

One dreary afternoon about four o'clock little Betty was sitting disconsolately, her hands in her lap. It was too wet and too nasty to go out; the rain had poured down all day. She had nothing to do; the working woman was getting things ready for the Warners' supper and Teddy was off somewhere buying a horse.

Suddenly, without warning, Cyrus opened the door. He walked in, shaking the drops of water from off his hat.

Betty sprang up with a cry; she was caught, trapped. At first she believed it was her mother. What should she do? When she faced her father, for once in her life she was grateful that he looked at her with eyes blinded by love; that his wits were slow of suspicion; that he was dull enough to believe whatever she said.

Her own countenance was pallid with fear. Instinct guided her speech.

"Father," she cried in alarm, "what is it? Are you ill? I have been ill too. So sick all day that this good woman came in to help with our supper. I couldn't get it. I didn't want to worry you and mother. You both work so hard. She, this kind woman, was going away just before you came. You won't tell mother, will you, about this; she would think I was shirking."

Her mother would have known the lie at once. Cyrus' unhappy eyes looking into his daughter's face, saw only her beauty—her extreme loveliness, and had no suspicion.

"We won't tell mother, eh? All right. Our secret—yours and mine—ain't it, my girl? You work too hard, anyhow; and now it will be worse than ever." His head sank.

"How? Why?" she exclaimed.

"A strike, a strike's on. There is no more work. Those fools want more pay and fewer hours. They won't let any others work, even willing ones."

"That means your being home every day," she said, more than half to herself. She was

seeing herself at it again; no more help; no more afternoons with Teddy. No more long hours in bed with chocolate before she was up; later on the dainty luncheons and drives.

She clasped her hands together.

"Oh, it's too bad; we have the hardest luck; the hardest kind of luck. It isn't fair," and she burst into tears.

Cyrus had no word of comfort. The man's spirits were at their lowest ebb. He needed comforting himself. He wandered around, restlessly, waiting for the other Betty. She never failed him. Never once in all the years of their married life had she failed him. He wanted her now terribly.

Outside the rain beat and beat, and dripped and dripped. It trickled down the windows; it blew in through the casements; it stormed and raged piteously. When it grew dark the storm increased.

At six o'clock Betty arrived, exhausted, cold and wet to the skin. Cyrus said nothing of his trouble. He took off her shoes and chafed her icy feet, talking of the weather. He heated her some tea and made her take it strong and hot.

The daughter stood looking on, wanting to help but afraid to move from Cyrus' side. She was in an emotion of terror for fear that stupid man would say something of the hired woman. She knew she could never carry a lie through with her mother.

The girl's face was white and strained. Along with her fear she was quivering with irritation. But Cyrus was thinking only of his wife—he had forgotten the "kind woman."

Their supper that night was not as good as usual, although no one noticed it. Cyrus ate rapidly to keep Betty from suspecting anything, but he had no knowledge of what passed his lips. He wanted her to have a good night's rest. He was worried at her appearance. Time enough to tell what he had to in the morning. Perhaps after a night's rest her face would seem less thin and careworn.

Neither of the women could eat. They picked and pretended, but each was busy with her own thoughts.

The rain continued. By contrast the three rooms looked less cheerless—less lamentably desolate.

Cyrus did the dishes; he insisted on this. "You both look done up," he called out, and little Betty shrank away afraid that the sight of her would make him continue.

The mother choked. Cyrus' unflagging thoughtfulness and care for her touched her aching heart.

After the last dish was washed and wiped, Cyrus undid the apron that he had tied about himself and sat down with a big breath. Betty the demure crossed the room to him. He took her on his lap, his heart at once so full of tenderness and concern for this wife of his that he forgot all his cares and discouragements. For a long time they were silent.

At last Betty raised her head from his stooped, tired shoulder. "Cyrus," she said, drawing a long sigh, "I received my notice today; after this week they don't want me any longer. I'm not quick enough."

"I'm glad of it," cried Cyrus brightly; "I had no business letting you go at all; we will get on all right. Don't you worry."

What a capital thing it was that he had not mentioned the strike.

All this time the other Betty had been leaning close against the window where the rain pattered and stormed; now she rose suddenly, struck by an idea: "Then, how are we going to live, I'd like to know, with father idle, and you idle, and no money in the bank. What are we going to do?" she asked impatiently.

"What do you mean?" cried her mother.

Cyrus was making a series of unintelligible signs to his daughter; she understood perfectly what they meant, but this thing had got to be faced some time. It was quite as well to have it over with. It was as hard for her as for the others, certainly.

"Father came home early today; there is a strike at the works. He can't work there. I suppose he did not want to let you know about it; but you have got to know some time. Now, you are out of work, too; oh, it's all too bad; it isn't right. Why can't we go back home to the cottage. We might as well starve there as here, and starvation is what this means, sooner or later."

For the first time in her life Betty had angered her father. He put his wife off his lap,

and jumped to his feet. "You have been supported all your life; you have never gone hungry that I know of; you've never been asked to work that I know of. You have been cared for and shielded from both. You might have spared your mother this tonight. Of course it's got to be faced; but she and I face it, not you. Go to bed. I don't want to hear anything more from you; and next time you keep still."

The thought Cyrus expressed was more coherent than the words he used in expressing it. Betty understood, and she obeyed; in fact she was afraid; as she left the room, she gave one glance towards her mother's white face. There were no signs of sympathy in it. The girl choked back the sobs that were coming. Existence was desolate—no one cared at all for her.

She lay awake hour after hour until the noises in the streets were gone, and all the tenants in the great house were quiet. Only the rain, pattering and beating, broke the heavy silence.

"What shall I do?" she was whispering to herself; "with both of them home I can have

nothing. There'll be no money. We will have terrible things to eat or nothing at all; and my clothes patched, dirty, coarse. Then the work—oh, it isn't true; it can't be true. All my life I must live this way. I won't have it so, I won't, I won't."

The outlook was dark; darker and gloomier than death itself. "It isn't fair," she wailed, as the picture grew vivid in her mind. "He could help us such a lot. Oh, what will become of me. I want to be pretty. I want a good time. I want clothes and money. I want to do as other girls do." She clenched her fists. The helplessness of her position was maddening. "I will have them! I will! I WILL!!"

In the room beyond, those other two caught no sound of Betty's weeping, yet neither Cyrus nor Betty the demure slept. It was a fearful night. One that lived in the memory of all three as a horror that could not be forgotten.

Before they were fairly through breakfast the next morning Kirby came bounding in; he was wearing a checked suit with a flaming tie of red silk around his neck; in his but-

ton-hole was a badge—white, with a blind Justice held by men labelled "Capitalist." Around the figure was the red flag of Anarchy.

"Come with me, Cy, this is goin' to be a great day. I'm going to speak to the men over at the works; a mass meeting. Ida'll be along to do it in German. We'll stir up something that's worth while. Come along."

Cyrus hesitated. Kirby during the pause regarded him with something approaching malignancy. His hobby was bordering very closely on insanity. Kirby assumed that every individual not in accord with his doctrines must be sympathizers with the capitalists. His hatred of rich men increased hourly. He could not wait for the day to arrive when he could lead a force—a multitude of starving, infuriated men, wild with their wrongs and mad for revenge against those begorged aristocrats.

Now at last the opportunity seemed ripe. The hesitation of one of the abused, enraged him.

"What t'll ails you? Are you crazy? Are you going to stand still all your life and be driven into a hole like this? a place a rat

would run from, when you could have a home."

Cyrus was still motionless and silent; he was terribly nonplussed.

It was Betty who came to his rescue. She had put on her hat and coat. Now she turned. "You see, Cyrus has promised to walk to my place with me. That's why he hesitated. He's promised. I won't let him break it."

Kirby drooped. The explanation was perfectly valid. "But you'll come later, eh. You may never have a chance like this again. It's a strike two ways. You want to be in it. Show yourself. Let 'em know how you stand."

The orator called out the last words. He was already on the stairs, going down rapidly in a fury of impatience to get to the scene of excitement.

"You must not go near them, Cyrus, dear; something will happen. I know it. Probably something dreadful. You must not go!"

Cyrus shook his head. He always yielded to Betty. Now he followed his own inclination as well.

When her father and mother were out of

sight Betty was off. She went directly to the Fellows' house and waited until she caught sight of Teddy.

"It's all over," she announced, when he joined her. "You tell your father he's got to do something. He's robbed my father. You can't call it anything else but cold-blooded, deliberate robbery; now he's got to make amends."

"Betty, I'll square it with you."

"How can you; what can you do? There I am working and slaving with a father and mother both home every second, knowing everything that's going on; knowing every time I move. What can you do?" She was scornful.

"I can give you money."

"How can I use it?"

"Oh, damn it, any way you please."

"That's right, swear. It's a fine way to talk to a girl. See here, for the last time, will you tell your father he must do something. Buy that well and pay for it in cash at once. We will starve. Simply starve. That's all."

"Betty, I can't work the old man. You know that. See here; there's one way we can

fix it; quit the hovel where you live and I will give you a place; it will be a dandy too. You can have all your own servants and dresses and—all the rest of it."

"Yes, and Disgrace too."

"Why, don't I love you? don't you love me? I can't see the complication. You think it over; I can't see the disgrace of it, myself. Take your own time. The offer is open. Where will we go today?"

"I ought to go home. Father will be there."

There was no great decision in her voice; it gave the man an opportunity for assertion. "Nonsense; if it is our last, we will make a good time of it." Teddy announced.

She yielded, with no question.

Meanwhile Cyrus was on his way home. Betty had been taken safely to her place of employment. Inadvertently, Warner fell into the very mass meeting Kirby had announced and he had determined to avoid. It was not held at the works at all, but on the street in front of a hall. The road was packed. Mounted on the seat of an empty truck in the

midst of black, shifting masses, Kirby stood. He was yelling out his words:

"We are accused of brutality, of want of wisdom. Why? Because we will not allow ourselves to be trampled upon by others; because we will not be silenced. We are here to stay. We are here with a purpose. A religion. It is the betterment of our condition, —yes, more,—the condition of all mankind, that we are struggling for; and betterment of any kind was never accomplished without revolution. It is for this reason that we must unite and work together in a banded unity. We must arm ourselves. Until we are all ready we may be silenced, perhaps, only to make a greater noise when our plans are ripe. But trampled on—Never!"

There was an angry repetition of the word through the crowd, that increased to an inarticulate shout. It surged and grew to a sound like the enraged growl of an angry beast.

"The day must come, it is not far distant when one of us well armed will appear at every door. Whoever has not the sign or password will be shot. We'll raise hell before

we're done," continued Kirby. He smote the air, glaring about him, daring any one to cry an opposition.

"We might as well die fighting as starve to death. Kill the capitalists. Do it now.

"Why must there be rich? Why must there be poor? Why not all alike?" remonstrated the orator. But at once he became malevolent again.

"You are to keep the law because your masters refuse you employment. You are to be peaceful because you are hungry and without a home or a shelter. If you refuse to die in your hovels, in due observation of law and order, then you are shot or hung. Is that it —huh?

"If that's the idea, then what you want is guns. What you want is not peace and law and order, but revolution."

Like the roar of an avalanche the phrase was taken up.

"That was it—By God—Revolution! Revolution! That was the word. This man had ideas."

Kirby was intoxicated with his success.

"We are in the midst of abundance, yet

we starve. We are turned out of house and home by sharks who make us ragged slaves, and beggars. Vampires who starve us and freeze us, and still expect us to obey the laws. Obey laws! Well, who is saying anything against that? Not you; not I; we do obey the laws. Yes, but not the statute laws. We obey the laws of man. The natural laws—provided for every rank of man. Those laws that render accessible to every man enough to eat, enough to wear, enough to support his family; and we can demand this. What we need is organization. That's all and that's simple. The day for it is come. Here now. What can you lose?—nothing. What can you win?—the world. Arm, brothers, slaves, arm. It don't require money. One man supplied with a dynamite bomb is equal to a regiment of militia. Dynamite is cheap. It's our power. It's our protection. It's our saviour. Arm yourselves. Men, men, wake up!"

The mob had been carried beyond excitement; it had become a howling pack of rabid, frenzied animals,—applauding, encouraging. Kirby was frantic. He was yelling at the top

of his lungs, shaking his fists into the faces of his audience.

"On, on," he screamed; "to the works, where your places are being filled. On, on to the works where the scabs are making small of you. Are you going to let the capitalists laugh at your sufferings and poverties?"

Shouts of "No," "No," pierced the air.

"Then show them what stuff you're made of. I'll lead you against the tyrants."

Kirby stepped down from the truck. On the spur of the moment, and full to the quick of animal combativeness the crowd fell into line behind this leader. There were cries and curses and beneath all these a droning undertone of great excitement and exasperation.

"Yes. Yes! On against the tyrants; that's the thing. That's our work. He'll lead. He's onto his job. We've been held up long enough. They won't play us for suckers any longer."

Cyrus in the midst of the rabble had attempted once to fight his way out. It was no use. He could not get out. Instead he was being carried helplessly along, against his will, into the very thing he shrank from encounter-

ing. The man looked about him stupidly. It was inexplicable how he had gotten here. He was all taken aback that he should be joining men in an attack on other men. An attempt to take lives. He was willing to listen to Kirby privately, but this was a different thing —listening and the actual doing were vastly different.

Harassed and troubled, Warner was swept along, and on. When the crowd stopped he looked up for the first time, his eyes wide, his lips apart. They were in the street fronting the works. Kirby, still exercising his authority as leader, was shouting and urging again. He was not mounted now, and only a few of the crowd could see him; but they all heard.

Cyrus caught a glimpse of him. The orator was hatless; his hair, longer and blacker than ever, streamed about his face. His tie was loose. There was a long rent in his checked coat, his trousers were splattered with mud. His linen was fearfully rumpled and soiled; he began to talk of the interests that affected not individuals but whole classes; the fairness of the strikers' present demands. He advised them not to hesitate.

"Force your demands—by blood, if necessary." He was absolutely reckless by now, no longer weighing his words. Also repeating himself with great frequency.

In the midst of this harangue there was a stir and commotion around the corner. One began to distinguish the quick sharp tramp of regular footsteps. By degrees the sound grew nearer. Two companies of blue-coated policemen were swinging into the street. They were headed toward the crowd. Rank after rank of strong, able-bodied men ready for duty.

The sight was so unexpected every face in the mob turned stupid and heavy. Kirby took it all in. On the second he scented a possible wavering of sentiment. It was now or never; he would stand firm. Cowardice, at least, would never be laid at his door.

"Here come the bloodhounds," he screamed. "At 'em. At 'em. Do your duty."

But as his voice ceased a sudden chill ran over the multitude. That fear of the law, inborn in crude natures, was rising. Those officers had come prepared to force order; that was evident. They carried in their hands re-

volvers—loaded and cocked; ready for immediate use. Duty was all right sometimes. Now it meant facing death, courting death; flaunting their bodies as targets before these lines of creatures who could fire straight.

Men mad for blood a moment before began to slink away one by one. A great babble of noise arose; not voices of protest but of peace, and the tones were apologetic.

Confusion and terror of personal combat ran riot. The fatal instant had passed and the instinct of self-preservation was as yet paramount.

Kirby was transfixed; he watched these men who were creeping away with averted heads and shrinking bodies, and for the moment he could not understand. Only a moment; then rage and fury seized him. He saw himself suddenly transformed from a leader to a man humiliated, shamed, deserted. The overthrow of his influence roused him beyond all control. What did it all mean? Did they guess for one minute that they could throw him down like this? Well, they'd find out they couldn't. That was all he had to say.

He'd show them, by God. He simply wouldn't have it.

Everything was dwarfed beside this gigantic insult. The cause itself became insignificant. The orator sprang up with a cry that echoed blocks away, waving his arms at the groups of disappearing men.

"You cowards!" he cried; "if you won't make your own strike for liberty I'll do it for you. Oh, if I could reach you once—just once, I'd make you sweat. But I'll show you, anyhow."

He clenched his fists; his face purple and swollen.

Nobody minded him. His cry went unheeded. It is hard to have told what would have happened then if this leader of men had not suddenly found himself gripped from behind by the arms. When he turned with an oath it was to find himself face to face with Cyrus.

Kirby's fury was a thing of almost instantaneous action. It radiated unceasingly from wildness to passiveness. His insult for the moment was completely forgotten now Cyrus had been here to witness his personal trium-

phant exhibition of bravery. The Warners would always know what a marvelous thing he had accomplished. His pride was so great that he could not reinstate his wrath even when he tried.

He forgot his yelling and his humiliation, his dire threats. He was quite beside himself with joy that he was discovered in the very midst of an heroic roll.

"Wasn't it great, Cy—just great," he kept saying again and again. "I had those fellows in the palm of my hand, moving 'em to my will. It's a grand power. I have to be careful not to abuse it. I told you we'd raise hell; and we did. Ain't through yet, either. You see what it took to clear the street," pointing with undisguised vanity to the police. "Well, you wait till our next meeting. It'll take ambulances to clear the road then, and don't you forget it."

While he talked, Cyrus had been leading the orator away from the scene of the disturbance. They crossed the street, emptied now of all except the police, and went undisturbed down an alley, walking through ash-heaps and mounds of garbage. Kirby all this time was

unconscious of where he stepped. He swaggered tremendously as he told of his teachings; but he was trembling with the after effects of the excitement.

Cyrus kept still, apparently listening to Kirby's boasts. When they were well away from the police Warner caught hold of his friend's shoulders and shook him roughly.

"You stop. You stop that rot, and listen to me a minute. You're making a damn fool of yourself, just a show, and no mistake. What are you thinking of, anyhow? You've done enough already to put you in prison. If you don't look out you'll get there with murder to answer for. You got to stop, Kirby. Do you hear?"

Kirby gaped at Warner in open-mouthed astonishment. How dared this man criticise; a laboring man, too. Incredible!

"I'm a fool, am I," he growled, pulling himself free from Cyrus' heavy grasp. "Well, I know what I'M about, anyhow. Some day you will, too. You ain't in sympathy with our society, eh?"

He put the question roughly.

"I ain't in sympathy with murderers; if that's what you mean."

"You want to stand right where you are, do you? Get thrown down by every bloke that's got a cent. I thought you'd been done out of enough to make you see some things by now. You are willing to die in the poor-house, are you?—rot there along with your women at the government's expense."

"No, I ain't," said Cyrus, exasperated. "But you and this mob ain't goin' at the business in a way to prevent it. If I don't get rich, at least I won't get hung. More than that, I never could see the right of killing under any conditions."

They went on in silence. With any other man Kirby by now would have been quarreling, but some strange affection that from the first had stirred his heart toward Cyrus still burned within his violent nature.

He was hurt and disturbed, but he was not angry. He was so aggrieved that he was overcome with self-pity. Some day Cyrus would understand. Kirby would simply go on with his work and wait for Cyrus when that day came. His eyes were moist as he

realized his own magnanimity towards this unreasoning friend. He saw himself in the future a martyred hero to the cause of the laboring man, sacrificing his life and—and his family—for the principles he espoused. That he was misunderstood now was but a part of the whole. Cyrus should have understood, but his misunderstanding he forgave freely. He found himself pitying Cyrus, too, for when the future came, that future that would show the name of Kirby to be worthy of canonization—Cyrus would be miserable.

This was all the nobility of his own nature asserting itself even in his moment of extreme discouragement. His head lifted; he was breathing hard. The greatest reformers had been the greatest sufferers. He was resigned.

Cyrus left Kirby at the tenement where Ida and the baby lived in two wretched rooms. Then Warner pushed on, to his own home hurriedly. He wondered at finding no one in. The rooms were dirty and grimy; they were full of the smells of night, the beds unmade and soiled dishes lying around in little piles. Cyrus got out his apron and went to work.

Meanwhile, Kirby gave great accounts to

Ida of the success of the day. He worked all the episodes out with his arms. Ida's white face burned. Her hands twitched nervously, as she listened. Kirby was suddenly excessively buoyant. He pummeled his boy in affected imitation of a prize-fighter; then he tossed the sickly child roughly in the air and laughed at the big frightened eyes that peered down at him. This son was named Reinsdorf Fisher—after an apostle of Anarchy. He was a pathetic little fellow, easily frightened and happy in intense quiet. He seemed a parody on his raging, loud-voiced father, of whom he was fearfully afraid.

"Our next meeting is at the hall tomorrow night. If the crowd's too big we will have it in the street. You've got to be there. Take the boy along. It's a good thing for him to hear and see. We will take some of the good stuff with us, Ida, to have it handy."

Mrs. Kirby's eyes dilated in horror; she looked wildly at her husband. He had released Reinsdorf and was bringing a large box across the floor; it was full of sawdust and very heavy. The man sat down beside it, working his hands through the siftings cautiously.

Suddenly Ida picked up her boy, straining his little figure close to her.

"Kirby, you are not going to take that tomorrow night," she cried.

Kirby looked up. "What ails you?" he growled.

"But the boy. I'm not afraid for myself; but the boy. If anything should happen and he was hurt. Oh, let me leave him here. It might mean his death."

Then Kirby arose. In his hands he was holding a short piece of lead pipe that he had just picked out of the sawdust. One end was plugged. From out of the other hung a long fuse. Raising this instrument of death over the woman's head, he cried aloud: "It would be his baptism in the fire of a good cause. I could ask no better thing! I do ask no better thing than that you both may give your lives to the gospel that we preach."

His eyes were a narrow squint of fire. He was fearfully in earnest. It was as if he were possessed with the mania of Death. The woman shuddered. She was holding the boy hugged to her so closely that suddenly he began to send up a soft, painful wail.

CHAPTER XII.

THE meeting did not come off the next night, for it rained. All day long the water poured down in torrents, and Kirby addressed a few followers indoors. He set the time for a full gathering a week ahead. Ida stayed home with the boy; likewise, the "good stuff" remained harmlessly in its box.

But this postponement brought little peace to the wretched woman. Every nerve in her fragile body was racked and aching—her mind was disordered with schemes to avert what was to come. It never occurred to her that she could refuse to obey Kirby—the question was, how to obey and protect her child at the same time.

She couldn't take her boy to that final meeting—the meeting of desperate men armed with desperate means. It was as if something was showing her the end before the end had come, and it forbade that baby's presence. Once a wild idea shot through her brain; she would take Reinsdorf and run away.

Contemplation of this idea showed its use-

lessness. It required money—everything required money. The Kirbys had absolutely nothing.

Ida went over and over everything, torn with a conflict of emotions. She believed with her entire soul in the equal rights of individuals, but she had no desire to express this belief when words meant danger to her boy. He must escape the doom that was hovering near by—with her it made no difference. What odds was it if with her the worst came to the worst?

Hourly the situation at the works grew more desperate. The hungrier the strikers became the less cautious they were of their lives—the more they listened to Kirby.

"Plug some of those fellows and see how long before things come your way," he kept repeating.

He was drinking a good deal now; lack of food sent the liquor directly to his brain. In this condition his passion against capitalists became savagery; but his oratory kept pace with his fury. His flow of words was astonishing; more than that, he had not the least concern about what he said or urged.

He was absolutely careless, fearless, desperate. So were the men to whom he talked.

At the Warners life was not gay. Betty the demure gave out. It was a combination of worry, work and no nourishment. Cyrus was like a crazy man. He hung over his wife day and night, wild with alarm, beside himself with nervousness; nothing she could say comforted him; the man was all unnerved. Occasionally, from sheer exhaustion he would fall asleep in a chair as he watched, and lie in a heavy stupor. Then Betty would scarcely breathe for fear of arousing him; but his rest was gone in a moment. All at once he would start up haunted by a terrible dream; a dream that showed Betty dead; cold, white, fearfully motionless. For hours afterwards he would be afraid to sit—the fear of sleeping again and seeing that vision was maddening.

He took care of his wife as he would have a child. His gentleness was pathetic—his awkwardness pitiful. She would not have a doctor, insisting that all she needed was rest. She did not add "food," because it would only have hurt Cyrus and done no good. The Warners, like the Kirbys, had nothing. Cyrus

understood, however, and one night he came in with an armful of things; for the first time in his life Cyrus had gone in debt.

During her mother's illness Betty the younger was at home very seldom; she pretended she was searching for work; instead, she was spending every day with Teddy. This young man felt, and with reason, that his hour had almost come. His turn at last. It had been a long, hard, ridiculous fight. Under the circumstances it spoke well for his patience and his strategy that it was coming out his way.

Betty was in her seventeenth year, and the fame of her beauty was spreading. Her ability of attracting men was very noticeable. When she began to appreciate all this her wisdom flew away.

"There is no reason why, with proper dress and care and money, I should not make a great place for myself," she announced.

After this her selfishness was supreme. Her consideration for her father and mother was wiped out of existence by her consideration for herself. "They'll never miss me as long as they have each other; and, after all, why

should I spend my beauty and my life scrubbing three nasty rooms in a common tenement."

It was a cold-blooded argument in favor of the final step. It proceeded from a cold-blooded nature. In reality there was no hesitation whatever in Betty's mind. She did not care.

At seven o'clock on the night set for the mass meeting, Kirby again stopped for Cyrus. Betty was up, for the first time in days—very pallid and very weak, but better.

"I've sent Ida and Reinsdorf on ahead. Come on, Cy, it'll be a big thing. Don't you try to stop him, Mrs. Warner. It's going to be something no laboring man wants to miss."

"She ain't stopping me," broke in Cyrus, promptly indignant. "She's been sick. I can't leave her. I won't leave her."

Then Kirby clamored at Cyrus' backsliding and left the house furiously angry.

When he came to the meeting place the square was crowded; packed with a sweating, howling horde of bestial men. It was an easy matter to incite them to riot or murder. That was what they had come there for; they were

gnawed with hunger; they were tired and discouraged and mad.

They welcomed Kirby vociferously. When Ida and the boy mounted the platform beside him, and Kirby pointed to them as his willing, living sacrifices on the altar of their sacred cause, the noise that broke out was terrifying.

"This revolution can never be accomplished except over ruins and ashes; over blood and dead bodies. Are you ready to begin?"

"Yes. Yes!" answered the frantic mob.

"Then come on," he yelled, waving his hands.

Ida pulled out a red flag and unfurled it. Standing between her boy and her husband, she marched first down the street, the motley pack in full cry behind her. Her boy was panting with exhaustion. Down his livid baby face ran tears of excitement and of terror. His tiny hands alternately applauded and beat the air.

The mother dared not look at him. Sometimes she caught her breath in sharp hisses. The acuteness of the pain she was bearing stabbed her.

They were living sacrifices. Kirby had

spoken truly. Her baby was the sacrifice offered by the father, sanctioned by the mother.

She gripped the red flag of anarchy, flaunting it above her head. She waved it, trying to screw up her courage, striving to hide the desire that tempted her; a desire to creep away somewhere with her baby and rest. Away from the turmoil that she hated and the noise that hurt her. But they were wanted here. At the head of this death's march. It was duty after all. The duty she herself years before had preached about.

With a sudden impetuosity, the woman began to sing. A terrible song. Her voice rose high, shrill, strident, above the din of those tramping feet. In less than a second the song was taken up, pouring out of a thousand steaming throats, a grisly sound.

All at once there came the cry, "The bloodhounds! The bloodhounds!"

Kirby's face went white like ashes. He gave one look in front; one at his wife and child by his side, and then he forgot everything.

"Let 'em have it," he shouted.

This time there was no fear in his mind that those men would desert.

On marched the two groups of men, coming nearer and nearer, in absolute silence. The singing had ceased. The uproar had stilled itself. There was not a murmur; it was the grewsome stillness preceding the awful breaking of a torrent. When the police were within three feet of Ida the captain of the force raised his hands:

"I call upon you in the name of the people to disperse," he cried.

"We are here to do our duty," replied Kirby. "Men, do your duty," he shouted back over his shoulder.

At that, and still in silence there came a movement from the center of the mob. A spark rose, flashed through the air. It swung over the heads of the men with a hiss and a splutter, aimed straight toward the lines of blue-coated men. It fell short; with a bound it dropped directly at the feet of Ida and Reinsdorf. Instantly there came a terrific explosion, a noise that deafened the ears and rolled away with the rip of a thunder crash, throwing its echoes back from between the walls.

For a moment no one seemed to know what had happened. The multitude was

paralyzed with fright. Then a terrible scene began. First the uproar broke loose. It rose from a mutter to a hurricane of sound. There were cries of

"Save yourselves!"

"Let 'em have it!"

"Bombs!" "Bombs!"

"Look out for another!"

Every one talked at once, spitting out words between curses and cries. The brute instinct of self-preservation at any cost was leaping to the surface. It was the idea of every man there to get away. If doing this meant crushing his neighbor—why, crush, that was all right. Batter out life if necessary.

The streets cleared as if by magic; the efforts of the officers were superfluous.

But two people up in front did not struggle or fight, or cry. A little child with a livid face and wide-opened, haunted eyes, and a body all wet and splotched with blood lay silent on a woman's lap; she was sitting on a piece of torn pavement. Across her had fallen the red flag of Anarchy, soaking fast with the redder blood that flowed from a great hole in her

side. Her hair was wet and matted with blood from another wound in her head. Drop by drop this ran down her cheeks unheeded. Yet all this time she crooned to the baby. How she lived to do it no one knew. No one but a mother could have breathed, hurt as she was hurt.

Kirby stood by them unharmed. He looked at them stupidly, his eyes wandering in indefinite search along the ground, but always coming back to them—those two, his wife and his son. He made no effort to touch them; once he raised his head to the group of faces that surrounded him and began to cry out unintelligible things. It was as if he asked aid. But when one of those men, moved to pity, put out a hand towards him he started up from the ground panic-stricken. No hands should restrain him. He had no idea what he did nor where he went. He simply followed that same inborn instinct that had possessed the mob.

Darting like a terror-stricken animal, he dodged and ran and hid. Once, going with full speed he hit with fearful force against a building; a cry of rage and pain broke from

his lips; but he kept on and on, and the place where he finally stopped was Cyrus Warner's.

The rooms were dark; the door was locked. Kirby pounded and called. Cyrus came at last, groping his way sleepily across the floor by the light of a candle.

Kirby entered. "For God's sake!" gasped Cyrus.

Kirby came forward. He was suddenly unable to walk. His legs tottered; all his strength was gone. Across his shirt there was a red streak. His left arm hung limp and useless by his side.

"For God's sake, what is it?" repeated Cyrus.

Kirby sank into a chair. Betty, alarmed by her husband's cry, came out.

"What is it? Yes; that's it; what is it?" he mumbled breathlessly.

"Ida! Is it Ida?" called Betty, sharply.

"Yes. Yes; Ida. That's it. Ida. They were a sacrifice. That's it. A living sacrifice." The man's face lighted up. His eyes rolled. Betty shivered.

"Cyrus, something terrible is the trouble. We must go and see," she whispered, her lips white.

Cyrus nodded.

"Perhaps murder," Betty went on.

Cyrus stared dumbly, first at her and then at Kirby. While Cyrus was waiting for Betty to dress Kirby muttered.

He told of living sacrifices, and exclaimed loudly: "It was duty!" But he would answer no questions. In fact, his mind did not seem to work at all.

Together Cyrus and Betty got the man to his home. The horror that seized Betty as she was about to actually step foot into the Kirbys' two small rooms made her faint. Her throat was choked with a lump that filled it.

Once inside there was nothing terrible to be seen. Nothing to show that murder had been committed, or anything wrong attempted.

"What is all the trouble, anyway?" she asked, sharply, shaking Kirby's shoulder.

Then the man began little by little to explain. He told enough to let them guess the rest. As he finished, out in the street there was the clang of a patrol wagon. The sound of that bell sent a fierce, unreasoning terror into the mind of the orator. It started his wits out of their sluggishness. He threw himself wildly upon Cyrus.

"Save me from them. They've come for me; to take me. I didn't kill them, Cy; you know that. Help me. Don't let 'em have me. Keep me safe until after Ida and the boy are cared for."

He cried and wept and begged, beside himself. He dragged himself across the floor, tugging at Cyrus' knees.

Cyrus picked him up. He would have sought to hide his friend; he pulled the orator half across the room; but he hadn't time. There was a clamor at the door; Cyrus dropped his burden. Kirby gave a scream. A moment later two policemen entered. Following them came more policemen, carrying a stretcher. On this lay the bodies of Ida and Reinsdorf; the bodies of the two sacrificed for the cause of the Laboring Man.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR days afterward Betty was constantly seeing those two poor bodies before her. She couldn't get away from the sight. The infinite pity of the thing had shaken her more than the horror. Night after night she would wake up trembling and frightened and calling to Cyrus: "Oh, oh, Cyrus, I saw it all so plainly—Ida and that poor baby." Then Cyrus soothed and quieted as best he could. Time and again this was repeated.

Ida and Reinsdorf were buried as became sacrifices, with much pomp and ceremony and no real feeling. Kirby sat through the services guarded on each side by a policeman. He was stolid, apparently unmoved; but there was a light in his continually rolling, roving red eyes that showed why emotion had not come to him.

After the funeral this orator, who had incited the riot was led back to jail. Kirby was waiting his trial for murder—the murder of his wife and child. Outside, a crowd had

collected, so that extra policemen had come to force a passageway through the throng. His name was on every one's lips. The whole story was spread broadcast. Every one stood staring and peering. As he walked down the steps toward the patrol wagon a subdued murmur followed him.

It was evening before Cyrus and Betty reached their home. She was pale and hollow-eyed. Cyrus had been terribly overcome during the day. His great heart ached with the pathos and dreadfulness of the whole affair.

Once inside their rooms the two noticed immediately the appearance of neglect over everything. With a sudden instinctive fear the mother rushed into the daughter's room. Things were in great confusion, as though there had been a hurried gathering together of clothes. On the table in conspicuous evidence lay a three-cornered piece of paper. The mother seized on it crazily.

"Dear Mother and Father: I have taken this day for going, because you are both away; that makes explanations and partings unnecessary. Did you both think I was go-

ing on forever in this way—a burden and a care? Did you suppose I could not see how you have struggled? My own uselessness has hurt me long enough. I am going to change it. I have found a place in the country. It will mean a home for me and a little money besides. Probably you would not have allowed me to go if I had asked, so I took the thing in my own hands.

"Don't be unhappy or lonesome. I am safe and well, and being cared for. Of course I shall write.

Your loving daughter,

"Betty."

Betty the mother gasped. She made her way out of the little room, when she had read the note, into the kitchen. Cyrus was standing, dumbly waiting.

Of course this was an explanation—Betty admitted that, but there was something, a suspicion, an uneasiness, an intangible something that had come over the woman. It pounded at her unceasingly. It made her quail with apprehension.

Cyrus read the note. The heaviness lifted from his face; he breathed hard.

"Well, that's all right. Thought she was a care, did she? Well, she didn't know; that's all. She just didn't know."

The mother shook her head; she said nothing. Perhaps she could not have spoken. Cyrus, hugely relieved, prepared for bed. He stretched and yawned, very tired from the emotions of the day; but for some reason Betty waited around, not going to bed till past midnight. She wandered irresolutely from room to room putting things to rights. Pottering over the trifles Betty had left behind.

The sensation of something terribly wrong would not leave her.

"After all, Ida and Reinsdorf are happier, perhaps," she whispered, desolately, to herself. Then the tears came from her hot, staring eyes, and she crept in to Cyrus for comfort.

* * * * * *

Across the city, not three miles from where the mother fought with the instinctive fear that is born of maternal love, the daughter slept, her head pillowed comfortably, her surroundings luxurious. She had slipped easily

into the life that she craved. There was no longer the necessity for rising at an early hour; no longer the danger of spoiling her hands; no longer the humiliation of wearing coarse garments. Neither had the young woman any qualms. Why should she have? She possessed beauty, youth and fascination. Teddy was a fixture, likewise, her slave; a very devoted lover. Betty had ample proof of that. The girl truly had learned a great deal; but there was one thing she had not guessed at—the peculiarities of men's natures.

CHAPTER XIV.

THINGS went from bad to worse with the Warners. The strikers' places at the works had all been filled with new men. The spirit of Anarchy for the moment was crushed out of sight. The horror of what had come to their leader cowed the men of Revolution. Betty was wretched and miserable; constantly mourning for her daughter. The mother's grief over the child's disappearance had driven out all other feeling of discouragement at their ill luck. No word had come from the girl; her people had no idea where to address her.

About this time the couple who had lived in the Warners' cottage departed. It was no great loss one way or another, as they had never paid the rent; it seemed the conspiring of Fate to leave no stone unturned. But how to obtain food had become an immense question. The perversity of poverty was heartbreaking; sometimes for days they could afford nothing; then Cyrus would take his place in line at a bake-shop and wait hours for a loaf

of bread or a few rolls. Occasionally he worked with a street gang, shoveling and picking. He grew thin and white, and his flesh drew tight over his body. Betty was losing her trimness—her gaunt face was no longer fresh and pretty. But through all their suffering there was never a harsh word, an ungentle expression between this husband and wife; neither one failed the other. Privation and misery could not break their bond of love.

When things seemed desperate there came a letter from Fellows; enclosed was a check. It was not a third what Cyrus' well was worth, but Fellows said frankly that it was this or nothing; it was all he was prepared to give. Cyrus, naturally, accepted the amount.

Then the man conceived a plan. It had lain dormant in his head a long time; this money brought it forward—a possibility. He talked it over with Betty in all detail—he would leave the money with his wife, every cent of it, except a few dollars to buy him a new suit. By care, they figured, it would last her some time. He meanwhile would work his way West and do a little prospecting. A man, a day laborer, who was down in his luck and

working in the city only because necessity demanded, had told him that there were mines in Michigan that paid great—iron ore mines. The hunt for these wasn't run into the ground, as gold mining was.

Cyrus had small idea of prospecting, but this man who had been a miner told Warner considerable. At any rate, anything was worth the trying. He couldn't go on this way—starvation was facing them, and the future was glum.

Betty asquiesced, not gaily or cheerfully, but with the bravery of desperation. It meant her first separation from her husband; that seemed a larger calamity than poverty or hunger; but for his own sake she knew that something had got to be done.

There were no hesitations or delays. When the thing was decided she moved out of their desolate three rooms into one room.

It fronted on an alley that was foul with dirt and the odors that rose from it pervaded the whole atmosphere; but the room was cheap and in itself immaculate.

It was here that the parting took place. Cyrus had purchased a cheap ticket that car-

ried him by rail into the State where he wanted to go. This saved weeks of tramping and the danger of stealing rides. He took his belongings in a canvas bag that Betty herself had made. She went over and over these things to see that they were all right. There was one entire new suit, a stout pair of shoes and some underclothing and socks, all of the coarsest kind. Beside these, there was a pair of heavy overalls, a book on mines, and a cheap, gray blanket. It was likely he would sleep many nights out of doors.

After these things were packed the bag was filled to its limit.

"You must wear your overcoat, dear; it won't go in," said Betty, looking up and panting with the exertion.

At last everything was ready. Cyrus stood up; he kept looking at the bag and his overcoat and hat. He talked spasmodically, dreading to speak the last word, yet fearfully conscious that it must come soon. Time was getting short. The man referred frequently to letters. It seemed the only tangible species of consolation.

He would write to her very often. Perhaps

sometimes news might be indefinite. for he would be in the hills and away from post-offices; so she must prepare herself for that, but when he could he would send her letters.

Betty nodded. She was cold and trembling. Her lips quivered so that she couldn't speak. The tears were coursing down Cyrus' pinched face. It was too hard—the cruelty of this moment was supreme.

"Oh, I can't stand it, dear; I can't; I can't." Betty suddenly cried out, throwing herself in his arms. He held her close, speechless with unhappiness and grief. He could not even encourage with hopes of the great things he would win.

"Take care of yourself," he gasped finally. "I couldn't stand it to come back and find you——" Cyrus had no words to finish.

There was another convulsive embrace. He reached down and took up his bag and coat. Then came one hysterical cry from the woman's pallid lips. Human grief could go no farther.

He was gone.

She watched him from the alley window, seeing his tall, lean figure through a haze of

tears. Once he turned and waved; after that she couldn't see him at all. When it finally became apparent that he was gone—quite, quite gone—all Betty's courage and restraint flew. She dropped on her knees and, with her head buried in her arms, cried as if her heart would break. When she rose again her knees shook; she was faint and weak. The afternoon had faded and outside the night was falling somber and black.

CHAPTER XV.

A MONTH passed; then another and another. The great forests, with their darkening lights and queer, uncertain silences in time became a solace to Cyrus Warner, though never for a moment's time was his longing for Betty appeased. All day he strode up and down the great, rugged hills, loving them for their wildness; sympathizing with them in their crudeness; talking to them for companionship. At night he rolled himself in his blanket and lay staring up into the star-studded blackness until he fell asleep in the midst of the gigantic solitude.

All about him were mines in operation. Apparently the country was alive with them. Sometimes he came close enough to hear the dull roar of machinery; then he would turn away in another direction. He was seeking a mine of his own—not a place as a day laborer.

The thought of this last came to his mind only as a necessity if all else failed; not that he ever admitted failure. His belief in ultimate success clung to him. He always wrote

it to Betty; he continually asserted it to himself. He would not be beaten; there was no such thing; he would break Fate in its own game.

The weather was turning very cold. As long as no snow fell his work was not interfered with. Occasionally the thought of passing an entire winter in inaction frightened him. It would mean a prolonging of this separation that was telling on him severely. But he did not dwell on the possibility; instead he plodded on with a monotonous routine that made all his days alike and took away all notion of time.

He got under way as soon as it was light, and tramped over the country, his eyes fixed on the ground for a spot of rusty grass, a sight of iron pyrite. He was laden on these journeys like a pack-horse. Over one shoulder was slung the canvas bag; dangling from this by cords was a small prospector's outfit —pans, a pick, a hammer, shovel, some bacon, coffee and a small sack of flour. It was a terrible lift to carry all day, but he seldom stopped two nights in exactly the same place.

Yet with all this, Cyrus' supply of food was

only sufficient for a few days. He depended on other camps or small towns for frequent replenishings. He simply could not carry more. The man walked slowly, that he might miss no possible chance, but his eyes became alert from the continued practice, and he covered many miles a day.

No snow came until January that winter. On the afternoon of the 31st of December Cyrus fell in with a man, a great bulk of a fellow, sitting on a stump in an attitude of extreme dejection. He stared at Cyrus in bewilderment.

"By the gods, this is luck!" he exclaimed, speaking to himself.

"What's up?" asked Cyrus.

"I'm stuck. I expected to cross this place and get into the next town by night, and I've missed it. I ain't got a thing to eat, and I'm dead beat. Will you share?"

"Sure." Cyrus put down his pack. Thus unburdened he straightened up his shoulders with a deep breath of relief.

"Miner?" he queried, after a moment.

"Not now. Was once. I don't care about

working underground much. You prospecting?"

"Huh-huh."

"Any luck?"

"None yet."

There was a pause. A cold blast of air swept down from the north. It cut through Cyrus' worn garments, stabbing his flesh. He shivered, then began to look around for twigs to kindle a fire. The stranger arose immediately and helped. In half an hour a bright blaze was springing up. But the night was not promising. It had suddenly fallen terribly cold; the sun went down in a bank of freezing gray clouds and the wind came up with a roar. It swept down between the hills and whistled through the hollows, and struck at the men.

Tingling and pricking, they got out the pans. The stranger sliced the bacon; Cyrus made the coffee. It was a long and a difficult business—it seemed impossible to cook in that cold—a thing chilled before it got fairly away from the fire. The wind blew fiercer at every blast.

"God damn this weather!" ejaculated the

stranger, jumping up and down, all the time he was smiting his hands together.

Cyrus plodded speechlessly. His face was a queer blue, and he had to pay considerable attention to his legs to keep them from shaking; but it was not his way to complain.

The coffee was finally cooked; it warmed them, sending a glow through their bodies. When it was gone the stranger began to talk:

"We've made a mistake, a big mistake," he exclaimed. "We ought to have got under the lee of some protection, a hill or something. We get the whole sweep of the climate here."

Cyrus knew this; he looked around furtively, trying to penetrate the blackness; it was a thoroughly useless attempt; the night was the darkest one he had ever seen; not even a star!

"No use now," he said, creeping closer to the fire. "We've got to stay awake and keep this going. That's sure."

"You don't happen to have any whiskey about you, I suppose?" The stranger put the question anxiously.

"I never carry it much; whiskey don't agree with me."

"Pshaw! I didn't have time to get my flask filled—I left town in a hustle."

Cyrus was an unsuspicious man; this explanation appeared perfectly valid. He offered no comments, and the stranger sank back against a tree, shivering every once in a while.

Conversation languished—neither man felt sociable. They sat there, two silent, desolate figures, lost in the vastness of a rugged, untamed forest solitude.

After a time Cyrus moved to a position where he could replenish the fire without rising. He smoked pipe after pipe of tobacco, thinking of Betty and wondering when—when he would get back to her; when luck would come his way again; when this endless battle would be settled.

The stranger was sleeping fitfully; once he called out sharply, dreaming he was being chased, and sending out curse after curse. A moment later he sat up, eyeing Cyrus with a look of evil cunning.

"Did you speak?"

Cyrus, startled out of his vision of Betty, replied gruffly: "No; no, I didn't say a word."

"Well, who bawled?"

"I didn't hear any one. Probably it was an animal." Cyrus was honest in this; his mind had not been on his surroundings. The expression on Warner's face showed this sufficiently to satisfy the stranger; but he slept no more during the entire night.

Some sense of danger apparently pursued this fellow who had been deceived in the distances between towns; but he went into no personalities. However, in the desultory talk that took place between these two men during the wretched hours of that endless night Cyrus learned one great piece of information —it concerned the existence of a magnetized rod that made the discovery of iron ore a matter of ease.

"I'll have one of those rods if I have to sell my clothes for it," he asserted loudly, his eyes rolling with enthusiasm.

"They're great," assented the stranger. "Too bad you didn't know of one sooner."

Before morning both men were crouching close to the flickering blaze; their supply of

sticks was exhausted. The cold was something fearful; there was nothing to break those horrible gusts of wind, nothing to give them relief from the numb aching of their half-frozen bodies.

"Lord, won't day ever come!" exclaimed the stranger, his teeth now chattering so that speech was difficult.

"We'll have to get up and tramp; it won't do to sit here like this after our fire's gone."

But as the last words came from his lips Cyrus sank into a doze; he had resisted as long as endurance had permitted. But he was not allowed an unbroken rest. Before an hour had passed he felt something soft falling and melting on his face. His eyes opened with a jerk—it had begun to snow. He stirred sharply; every move was torture; the fire was completely out; the stranger, lying in a heap, was breathing noisily.

Far away the tops of the trees were a faint outline against the skies—morning was coming at last, thank God!

Cyrus struggled to his feet; he leaned over and shook his companion:

"Get up, pardner; this won't do. It'll mean your death, sure. Get up."

At the last cry the stranger did get up with a bound and an oath. He jumped to his feet and stood alert, poised for an immediate struggle. For fully a minute he stood like this looking into Cyrus' face and trying to place himself. He had evidently received a tremendous fright. His brain was teeming with some kind of a personal danger. When he recovered he dropped his eyes sheepishly.

"You see, I was dreaming that some bloke was hunting me. I was getting ready to have it out," he explained, his voice trembling. For hours afterward he still showed evidences of fear.

This time there shot through Cyrus' mind a little curiosity as to what his pardner's occupation was.

Dawn did not arrive with a flaming announcement that morning; daylight came because it was law, not from choice. The sun kept in persistent hiding behind the clouds that piled up steadily; everywhere the sky was grey with them. The atmosphere was thick with snow that beat down in sheets of blind,

whirling torture. It sifted down their backs and cut their skin; there was no escape. The wind increased until it blew a gale that roared and raged pitilessly on the two struggling men. It seemed to spend its entire rage on them. But its very pitilessness goaded them into action and preserved their lives, for they could not stay still. They hurried and tramped when exhaustion had become physical pain, and a total collapse was imminent. They wandered unceasingly when it became evident that all sense of direction and distance was lost. They crossed half-frozen places; waded through drifts waist deep, the heat of their bodies melting the snow on their clothes; only to freeze later stiff and hard. Their faces were raw from the pelt of the storm. There was not a sound anywhere; no objects; nothing but the drift of the snow and the shriek of the wind. On they went, tortured, beaten, chased; always on and on.

"Lord, what a spot," muttered the stranger. "Who'd think this could happen in a civilized land?"

"We must be near somewhere," Cyrus kept

repeating. "I have never walked so long before and come to nothing."

The possibility of another sleepless night out of doors was unendurable; but something had got to happen soon. It was becoming clear that they could not struggle on much longer. They were used up, nervously and physically; neither one spoke of it, though each one understood.

"If it gets much colder, or we have to walk much longer—I don't know ——" whispered the stranger.

Cyrus pushed on silently. The snow began to crunch under their feet; the sun was still hidden. There was no signs of a progressing day, for the dull gray was unbroken; but instinct told them it must be afternoon. Eight hours of this heart-breaking battle!

Still they could not stop; they dared not. A fire was out of the question; so were rest and food. Could this be the end—was it the end—here, in the very midst of a much-frequented country?

All at once from out of that gigantic frozen solitude there sprang a distinct object. The same instant both men saw it. It met their

strained, half-blinded vision through no definite shape; only as something that rose before them different from the eternal landscape of frozen things.

"I guess we're coming to something," gasped Cyrus, going forward in a queer hitching haste. For the first time in his life he was mad with impatience.

"Hold on—wait—I can't keep up," cried the stranger in a trembling voice.

Cyrus slowed his gait. The thing was farther away than at first he had thought. After he had stared at it steadily it seemed to disappear.

"You don't suppose——" Cyrus began, then hesitated; he could not speak the doubt that assailed him.

"If that's so, I'm done for." The stranger was following the same thought.

A moment later he stumbled, falling full length on the ice-incrusted snow, and lay there, making no effort to rise.

Cyrus pulled him up. As he bent over, suddenly there came to his ears a sound, scarcely more than the vibration of the air. But it arose above the shriek of the wind. It was

distinct. He listened a moment, bewildered; then the sound became familiar.

"It's all right; it's all right," he cried, standing his companion up and holding him in position. This stranger was losing all power over his legs.

Then began the final fight over Nature, and it was Cyrus' dogged persistence that conquered. The stranger kept stumbling; but for Cyrus the man would have died within calling distance of refuge. They went forward step by step, their bodies quivering, their brains unsteady.

As the two stepped across the threshold of shelter the stranger fell again, and this time Cyrus failed to get him up. He lay mumbling that he might as well have been strung up, it was death anyhow. Fortunately no one paid any attention to what he said.

Opposite to him Cyrus was talking fiercely to the men who were undressing him. He waved his arms and rolled his eyes and fought.

"It's so hot; so damnably hot. Leave my clothes on me," he cried. Then he began to swear horribly.

Cyrus rallied after a few hours. His constitution, in spite of hard usage and age, was not shattered. It rose to the man's needs, still the same powerful thing that had carried him as a boy through the battle against poverty and starvation.

The stranger, too, pulled out of his plight, although for days his condition was pitiful, and during the next four months these two men dug and picked side by side, while the elements without stormed and raged.

There was nothing but storm after storm; the snow fell and fell. It stood in drifts higher than a man's length; it covered the ground two and three feet on a level. It shut the men in beyond all hope of release. There was nothing in sight but trees and frozen stuff; the country all about was like the vast ice regions of the far north.

Cyrus could not get beyond the camp. He had no alternative but to stay here and work the days out to a finish at the interminable mining. He settled to it, accepting fate silently yet aching in every part of his great being for Betty; his beloved Betty.

But the stranger fretted and fumed. He

was unsociable, taciturn, uneasy, regarding every man about him, except Cyrus, with an open suspicion that made him very unpopular. Sometimes to throw his companions off the track he feigned great abstraction pretending not to see and hear many things that went on about him. But really nothing escaped this man's observation. He was fearfully acute in every sense.

His peace at night was continually disturbed. He lay rolled in his blanket, staring wide awake long after the other men slept. He could not sleep; he could not doze. There was something the matter with him; something in him that goaded him to move on, rebelling at his inaction here. But how could he? How could he move on? Walking across that wilderness of ice and snow was impossible. He had no instrument to guide him. It was sheer madness to start out now. Yet to stay—what did that mean—what did it mean?

There was one little breath of comfort. It did not stand for much, but it was something. If he couldn't get out, at least no outsider could get in, either, unless a very imperative

need urged the attempt. Revenge, for instance!

At this point the man would draw himself out of his blanket and sit peering through the darkness, clutching his revolver and listening. By degrees the silence reassured him; then he would lie down again with a long sigh. But in spite of all this the days did pass.

Late in the spring the report came that a road had been opened up to the next town. It was a rumor. No one had come through yet. But that made no difference. From the moment he heard this, the stranger knew no rest.

"I got to chuck this job—that's all," he announced to Cyrus after a few hours of tortured thought. The suspicion in him had grown stronger than any emotion or reason. He could not stand it. He was like some cornered animal waiting the coming of his doom.

Cyrus put down his pick. He did not approve of this man, but he did feel sorry for him. "It ain't a good time to start out," he suggested.

"It ain't a good time to stay, either. I got to go, that's all," the man repeated.

"You know the roads?"

The stranger shook his head.

Cyrus looked at him curiously. There was something in his comrade's expression that was very like fear.

"Say," he broke in suddenly, following an impulse, "I tell you what I'll do, if you're bound to go. I've got a compass. It ain't an elaborate affair, but it points north all right. I bought it off a fellow here after we got in camp. I thought I needed it then, it was such a close call we had in that storm. But you can have it. I'm goin' to wait till the snow's off before I begin my job again. I won't need it, and it may do you good."

The stranger raised his head; his face was very red. "Do you mean it, pard?"

"Sure."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I ain't ungrateful. I kin put you onto a mine —a showing not very far from here, either. It's a corker, or I miss my calculation, but I can't stay in this neighborhood long enough to work it. I got to go. A compass is worth

more to me just now than fifty mines," the stranger paused.

Cyrus gasped. "You ain't doin' me small?"

"No; it's the real thing."

By degrees the stranger told of the claim. He repeated frequently that it belonged to him, but he couldn't stop long enough in this part of the country to open it. Probably before he came back some other fellow would have rediscovered it. So Cyrus could have it for the compass.

Cyrus listened, with his eyes rolling. It was good luck at last! Good luck! And all for a compass—a bit of thing costing less than a dollar, and bought on the spur of the moment. What strange tricks fate did play when it was in the humor!

The two talked together hurriedly, discussing, planning, arranging; for the stranger, once seeing his way clear to move on, was spurred into an immediate leaving. He could not rest. It was hurry, hurry, hurry. He waited for nothing; there were no breaks or pauses. Before night had come he had fixed everything and set out, his compass fastened securely in his pocket. He carried a scant

stock of supplies in a bag of soiled burlap sewed down its length with string and tied at one end with a heavy cord. He and Cyrus shook hands heavily at parting; then Cyrus watched him go.

He strode along, crouching under the load, but swinging across the hills, on and on until the bent figure disappeared, far away behind the trees.

"I wonder what that fellow's runnin' from, anyhow. The law, most likely. But I'm mighty thankful I could help him. It ain't fun to be chased. Not much fun to be chased."

CHAPTER XVI.

LIFE was hideous no longer. Betty was living in great state. It seemed as though she had never lived in any other way but the extreme of luxury. At first she had been strongly moved by all this wealth, like a child in her delight; then she was besieged by the notion that in some fashion she must repay Teddy for all he was doing—all he was giving to her; so she lost her high ways and became very different. She was yielding, always ready to do his bidding, instead of commanding. It was a mistake, a fatal mistake. After a few weeks of it Teddy became bored. He always knew exactly how he should find her. It was intensely stupid.

She realized the change too late. Then she lost all frankness, all sincerity, and took on instead a flippant manner that hid all real feeling, if she had any. The one genuine sensation that apparently belonged to her from now on was temper.

She could be very angry; so angry that it

went past all reason and got into the extreme. It was a passion, terrible, fierce, wicked, that turned her into an untamed monster. She grew old beyond her years, also more beautiful; in fact, it was her marvelous face that held Teddy, when her personality ceased to charm him. He no longer stopped to consider what her feelings were toward him; their attitude of mind toward each other had altered materially. The man understood that as long as she pleased him and he paid for the privilege of being pleased, he could own her. It was a matter of barter and change, the sort of arrangement that was not conducive to affection, but saved misunderstanding.

The couple lived a fast life, doing something all the time; they traveled a little, but seldom went far away from the city. Betty preferred the city to any place on earth. She liked the noise and the rattle outside; the constant stream of people; and in her own apartment it pleased her to be complete mistress.

She entertained the men that Teddy brought, unhampered by conventionalities, and they were usually boisterous affairs. She

liked to carry things as far as they could go. It was this same spirit that became the keynote to her whole existence.

She overcame her prejudices against liquor, because it became a necessity to buoy up on daily braces of whiskey. The taste of the stuff was dreadful, but the after effects delicious.

The girl dressed extravagantly; in fact, she seemed to be continually seeking methods of spending money. She threw away a fortune on races and games. Bit by bit these games grew to have an immense fascination for her. She played and played, tingling to her fingertips with excitement, usually losing.

Teddy eyed her critically; she was a most expensive toy, but he was constantly seeing other men eye her with open admiration. This one fact made him liberal; his pride was touched. He had what other men could not get. Betty showed plainly that she was not interested in the species man. He could see that. And as long as his possession remained valuable and superior in other men's eyes, just so long no other should step in. It was a curious game.

Betty had written once to her mother, sending the letter to the old rooms. It had not surprised her that an answer never came. She did not expect it. She had given no address. After the letter had gone she sat for a long time thinking. Something in her was touched, some remembrance awakened. She looked back into the past and wondered.

"I wouldn't go back; I couldn't. Those rooms, that poverty—oh, oh! Oh, I could not," she argued, and as she spoke her fingers were running up and down a string of pearls. That night for the first time she showed something near to real affection toward Teddy. His response to it was his first bit of brutality toward her—he was seeing that chance to "show her."

As the summer waned and winter came on their life went from "fast" to riotous. She was becoming satiated with wealth, but she craved continual excitement—it was always something new. She scattered money so lavishly that Teddy grew uneasy; the life was ruining his resources. Also, it was telling on her. Her whims were as changeable as the wind. There was a strained look in her eyes;

the color in her face was extreme pallor. Her moods were terrible; the whiskey was resorted to with alarming frequency; it was all in line with the pace that breaks, then kills.

Her mind never seemed to be clear any more. Sometimes she was tortured with queer visions of her father and her mother. When these came she would sit down and argue the entire thing out with them, as if they were present, showing them how she could not, could not be poor. Flinging her arms wide open, she would cry, "Look at me! My beauty was something. It was dear to me. Dearer than anything else; it deserved recognition. What could I do but this?"

Once after such a scene she sent some money to her mother. Of course she never heard from it; but at the time it eased her mind and drove the vision away.

By Christmas time Teddy's bank account was low, very low, and he was in an ugly temper. After that first evidence of brutality toward Betty he was less careful of his temper, and outbursts occurred from him with great frequency and increasing steadily in violence. It got so that nothing she did was

right. He hounded her about money, twitted her about her poverty, sneered at her fading looks. He belittled her in every possible way.

At first she defied him with stinging replies; suddenly she became meek; finally frightened. It was when the man saw this, that with a gleam he realized his power. He had her underneath his grip. He had danced his last for her. She would do the dancing hereafter—the hideous dance of complete degradation.

He followed up the advantage promptly, doing everything to hurt her. She never knew what to expect. She cowered back whenever he approached, sometimes fearing his violence. He seized her arms and held them until she bit her lips with pain; or he'd catch the soft lobes of her tiny pink ears between his teeth and grind them.

Once after this performance she gave a shrill scream—drops of blood were dripping down her face. His teeth had met between the flesh. It was a beastly performance. His threats to cast her off always followed these scenes, and silenced the fury that raged in her. But after he was gone it would break loose into a pas-

sion, roused by physical agony, and gaining strength from the mental knowledge of her own wretched miserable helplessness. Her ravings were terrible. She would tear her hair and dig her nails into her flesh and pound her body.

"The brute! The brute! I'll not stand this forever. Even to save me from starvation, I'll not stand it! Oh, it can't go on always like this. It shall not. I'll do something some day. Something that he'll be responsible for. It will not be my fault, but his own. I'll do something—something. The beast!" she cried, between her teeth; all the time rocking her body to and fro.

To look at her then, with her poor body marred by the man's blows, and her pallid face ravaged by temper and excesses, there were few signs about her of anything akin to beauty. Yet it had been less than a year.

Oh, life was not very gay; in spite of the wealth and the comforts and the idleness, life was not very gay.

Time went on. Insensibly their intercourse drifted into a series of brutalities. Their separations increased in length. Teddy spent

very little time with her; also he cut down her expenses. But from some inexplicable motive he continued to look upon her as his possession—he still owned her. Respect between them was a dead thing of the past. Love there had never been. The degradation of their companionship was rampant, but Betty sank numbly into the position where he had pushed her.

She ceased to argue with visions. She had no symptoms of remorse, no regrets; she still believed that her decision against her poverty was right. That this decision had entangled her in a bad web of life, holding her fast in its meshes, was but part of the scheme of the universe.

She was abused beyond all reason, and she accepted it uncomplainingly. Even the man was stunned sometimes at her silence, but he did not know.

Somewhere deep down in Betty's heart, rooted there, was a resolve. A thing that was waiting for time; a thing that was going to break itself loose some day when time was ripe, and with the force of a battering ram

fly to the destruction of certain doings. She was uncomplaining now; but wait.

If the man had been a reader of faces he would have shuddered at the expression in her countenance; instead of that he laughed when she shrank from him in fear.

But this resolve was marked there. It gleamed underneath her lines and scars; it burned out from her eyes in a great glare; it held its head like a poisonous thing, erect above the grip of her hands when they were clutched in pain that she stifled—the pain of his inflicting.

By the time winter had gone no one would have recognized Betty Warner, a child in years—a forlorn, broken, pitiful wreck of a woman in everything else.

The spring budded and passed into the blossom of early summer. Early one morning Betty dragged herself to a window. The freshness and beauty of the world sent a pain through her tired, aching heart. What a mistake everything was, anyway.

Up above, somewhere in a tree, a robin was making a great medley of song. He was busy at nest-building. There was an exhilaration

in the air—a sense of wanting to live; of the goodness of being alive. Perhaps, under some conditions life was not a mistake. Perhaps if she had tried in time she might have won him back; then it would never have come to this.

Suddenly the man about whom she thought appeared in the street below. Betty raised her hand to her eyes, shielding them from the glare of the sun and watching him. His coming at this hour was unusual. The girl quivered, promptly losing all the softened emotions that had come to her. This visit boded no good. What would he do to her today?

She raised her body, every move hurting her; she was sore and lame and sick. But she did not rise when he came in. and her eyes were still wandering over the scene outside. The heavy brightness of the clear morning was full upon her. Teddy stopped halfway across the room and stared at her.

"God, but you're a sight!" he exclaimed.

He was dressed in a riding-suit, with long patent-leather leggins up to his knees, fawn-colored riding tights and a short jacket. He

did not remove his hat. In his hand he carried a short, heavy whip. This whip was an elegant affair, with considerable gold-work about it. He flicked it continually.

Betty had had a severe schooling in self-repression; but she never became quite used to references of her faded beauty. On the instant a deep flush crept over her cheeks. He saw it at once.

"That's better," he laughed. "Color makes the picture complete. Lord, but you do look common."

Then he raised the whip deliberately, and going closer he struck her a blow in each cheek—a sharp, stinging cut, that brought the blood leaping to the surface.

The woman never cringed.

"I'll leave a spot of color for you to thank me for. It makes you look young. And, say, I've come here to tell you to get out. I need the place; but empty. You are an inferior article now. I want something fresh. You move today. Understand! You're not to play any of your God damn sneaking tricks on me. You take the stuff with you that you landed here with. What I paid for stays."

What blows and abuse could not accomplish, this order more than filled. Betty rose. In her face, ghastly white except for the bright red welt in each cheek, was an expression of terror. It had come. She was to be tossed aside.

"Don't, Teddy; don't. I can't go back. I've nowhere to go. Haven't I given you the best of my life? Even a dog is entitled to something for faithful service. Give me what you would give a dog."

"You haven't the value of a dog. You're in my way. I tell you, I want you to get out today; mind, today."

The girl threw herself at him; he stepped aside with a quick move, and Betty, losing her balance, fell her length on the floor. She got up to her knees quickly and clutched at the man's legs. Anything to hold him; anything to gain time.

"Teddy, I'll do anything for you. You know that. Only don't send me out into it again. Poverty! I can't stand it! Teddy, don't do that. Oh——"

The cry came from her in spite of all she could do, for the man to free himself from

her hands was raining blow after blow on her. They fell anywhere—on her body, her hands, her head; yet, above the agony of the lashing the woman was striving to band together all her reasoning faculties for one final plea. This torment was momentary; to be sent out would be a lasting hell, enduring until death. She was oppressed with the dread of poverty —and what poverty brought! It was the only thing which moved her, the one thing she could not endure.

"Damn you, let me go. Take your hands off me." Teddy's face was flaming.

"Won't anything change you? Can't I stay? Won't you give me something—something to just keep me on?" The words poured out; she had no longer any pride, any dignity.

"No; curse you! I won't give you a thing. I won't do a thing for you; and I want you to get out." The whip fell again, but it did not rise. Mad with the hurts she had received, goaded beyond everything, by the desperation of meeting the final end, Betty seized the whip, her temper aroused in all its violence.

She sprang from her knees, raging, furious,

and stood up before the man—no longer a woman, but an animal—with animal instincts, animal feelings, animal methods.

Teddy, a coward, as all bullies are, backed away. She headed him off. Then began a series of maneuvers, and it was he who cowered and quailed—not she. They faced each other speechlessly—moving about, always face to face; he trying to escape, she to corner. The sound of her breath, labored and gasping, filled the room. The welts on her face stood out swollen, blood-red. His countenance was livid.

Suddenly she lurched forward, her hand raised; the whip came down with terrific force. It was the heavy end, the end so elaborately ornamented with gold. It struck him squarely on the left temple.

As he fell she was upon him, a mad creature; her head thrown back, her fists doubled.

Then the beastliness of the thing became appalling.

* * * * * * *

The robin on the tree was still pluming itself and singing, when suddenly the slam of a door startled it. A woman, shabby,

ragged, shrinking, peered out; then came cautiously down the steps. Her face was covered with a veil. but its whiteness showed through the covering.

She stood looking furtively up and down the street. There was about her the uncertainty that goes with hopelessness, sheer hopelessness. The robin grew uneasy, then the bird flew away; but the woman did not notice its flight; she was concerned with her thoughts, and they were heavy with the vengeance of the law. It was hanging over her a matter of a short time.

She hurried down the steps, slinking away, turning every corner wide, moving clear of every passer-by. So she passed out of sight, still slinking. It was the end of everything, the final end. Pursued—all the rest of her life pursued.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONE can get through with the finishing of many shirts a day, providing one's back holds out. Betty the demure crouched over a machine hour after hour, stitching, stitching, always stitching; and the pile of garments at her side grew higher. There was always the same number to send each night. Faster work never increased it; slower she never did. The routine of her days was relentless. At six o'clock she had breakfast—it was a cup of tea and a hard roll; then until twelve o'clock she worked. At that time there was a dinner—usually a dish of soup, sometimes a bit of meat with a piece of potato. At night it was tea and roll, over again.

She was careless of her dress now, and her room was not always neat. What was the use; no one came to see, and she worked hard enough anyway. The rank odor of foul alleys poured in at the windows all day and all night. Personal cleanliness would not do away with that. And indoors it was dark, gloomy, lamentably desolate. This she could

not change either. It had been months since she had any word from Cyrus. He was probably dead; no doubt of it at all; only death would keep him from sending those letters that breathed of hope and spoke continually of love. Betty mourned for him night and day. Sitting over that machine she poured her heart out in grief—the tears fell and fell, rolling down over her cheeks that were no longer fresh and pink, but sunken into dark shadows. Her hair, odorous with the spices of Araby, was streaked with grey, and piled loosely on her head. Her eyes were dimmed with crying and working too much in the dark. She was pitifully thin.

The heat of late July was in the air; the atmosphere was stagnant, shimmering and vibrating. It took the very breath of life from one's lungs. The sun was like an open furnace, pouring out heat that burned everything it touched. There was no escaping it. It beat down in a blue glare, blistering and torturing—death in its rays.

At four in the afternoon it became unendurable. There was not a sign of wind stirring. Betty, doubled over her work, gasped.

She had had nothing to eat since morning. The hour at noon she had taken for rest—rest that was an absolute demand. Great black circles rimmed her eyes; the rest of her face was white to her lips; yet she sewed. The room was full of smells—the smell of foul stuff decaying in the sun, the smell of filth and overcrowding; the smell of hot humanity when it is poor, crowded, unkempt, unclean.

Suddenly Betty started to her feet, grasping at her head, reeling with fatigue. She stumbled half way toward the bed. Before she could cross the room, without the least warning, she fell heavily on the floor and lay there still and rigid, her lips a queer blue black color. It was a total collapse; the miracle was how she had kept up so long.

Only a few seconds afterward there was considerable commotion outside her room. A big voice was asking: "Is Mrs. Warner in this place?"

And an answering voice, "That's where, if she's still any place on this earth."

A moment later, and without a preliminary knock, the door of Betty's room was thrown open with a wide swing. Cyrus stepped in.

His countenance was radiant; his whole body buoyant. He gave one glance, then all life left his expression.

With a cry of horror he looked at the prostrate figure on the floor. In that one swift second he took in everything—the poverty, the suffering, the hardship of the months gone by; those months of separation and agony. His own miserable weeks were forgotten before the evidences of what this woman had borne.

He knelt down, raising the poor, wasted figure in his arms—his beloved Betty, the woman he had taken unto himelf, to love, honor and protect.

"Oh, Betty, my girl, my girl; open your eyes. I've come back to you, dear. It's all right. Don't leave me now, my girl. I'm back now," he called, his voice sharp with anxiety.

Some note in it recalled her wandering sense, and she did open her eyes with a stifled groan. She looked up directly into his face, then for an instant Betty's heart stood still. She was terror stricken. His presence was like the leading of the dead back to life. She

had awakened from unconsciousness into delirium. She caught her breath, at the same time seized hold of him wildly, and he with a cry threw both arms about her, holding her to him, sobbing like a child, but sobbing with joy.

She had come back to him; nothing else mattered but that; she was there, his Betty —not dead, but alive with him.

Care and responsibility left his mind; he was back again with his wife, crowned with the victories of success; his work was finished, and he had won. His perversity and dogged insistence had won. He assured her continually of that. There was nothing else to tell; no failures to recount; no disappointments to go over; he had endured both when they had come, but they were between God and himself—not between himself and men. He had done his work, fought his battles, and resisted the onslaught of his enemies,—poverty and the elements; and he had conquered them.

Cyrus told Betty a great deal of the inspiration that she had been to him. He poured out all the torrent of pent-up love that

had been stifling him during the miserable months of separation. He let her know how his hopes were always high, because of thinking of what the future held for them together. How he knew that it must end right for them all. Fears?—No, there had been no fears; there was no failure possible. He would not hint at the other side; but somehow Betty the demure read beneath all this and saw for herself. It flashed before her like a vision,—the man's unfailing courage, unflinching patience, dogged persistence.

The woman looked at him, understanding what he had endured and overcome; what he had suffered and withstood. How from the first he had made it a question only of success or death, and had carried triumph into the very camp of defeat.

Hour after hour they sat close together, her hand fast in his, her face against his face. The night with its breathless heat and nauseating odors was forgotten; the shirts lay in a small pile on the floor, one still unfinished floundered helpless from the presser of the machine. The cries and street noises had sub-

sided. All over the city the people were in bed.

These two had no remembrance of time. It was long past midnight when the sound of cautious footsteps came creeping around the house and up the stairs. Cyrus holding Betty close paid no heed. Their emotion of boundless joy held them in its fierce grip—joy too deep for human comprehension—too profound for outside interruption.

The steps continued; then stopped abruptly outside. The door opened. Like the shadow of death and as noiselessly, a wretched figure slunk in. Cyrus started, thinking only of some mistake. The woman kept on, closed the door, locked it, then leaned over with her ear to the key-hole and listened intently. Suddenly she turned.

"They're after me. I know it. Hide me. For God's sake, don't give me up," she whispered.

Cyrus looked at her; there was an abrupt recognition; a recognition that he put aside as unreal, impossible; he drew a deep breath; his hands fell helplessly by his side. What

doom was this that was hanging over his house?

"What is it?" asked Betty the demure.

Cyrus did not answer; he had lost all faculty of dealing with the situation. It was beyond him. He knew the face; yet it could not be—it could not be—the thing was too ghastly.

The miserable woman turned again; every move she made gave the impression of slinking. She held out her hands, "Oh, mother," she wailed.

At that cry the world broke about the mother's head.

"No! No! No!" she screamed, violently clinging to Cyrus. "Not that, not that!"

At once the woman cowered back, bowing her head upon her arms, misunderstanding surprise for repudiation.

"I deserve it, of course. I am here unasked, unbidden. I left—Hark!" She started up, listening again. No sound anywhere; only the noises of sleep, the deep exhaling of the hideous creature, night.

Suddenly the tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, Mother, Father,—I have looked everywhere

for a refuge. If you do not take me then there is no hope. I must go to them. His money will hunt me out. I am afraid. I am so afraid to die!" She shuddered. She was humbled at last. So humbled that she would never rise again.

Cyrus went to her swiftly, only the years of her childhood rose in his sight. Reason was returning. At last he appreciated that this was his girl.

"My girl," he stammered. "What is it?"

But the mother caught the child in her arms. This was their re-uniting. She had no questions; no rebukes. Maternal love, stronger than life, stronger than death, was here. "You must never leave us again, dear; never as long as we have a roof above our heads," she said.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CYRUS had come home believing his last conflict had been fought. But had it? Was not all life and every hour in life a huge battle against the onset of that monster, the World.

By degrees little Betty's story came out. As he listened, the great protective instinct in Cyrus rose, alert and aggressive. He could not stand it; never had he been so roused. He struggled with his hands to keep them still; his eyes rolled, his breath came quivering from his open lips. He was stricken speechless with the horror of the thing.

When the girl bared her neck and breast, showing him the scars and evidences of the abuse she had received, Cyrus became a raging beast. What was the use of restraint before such cruelty as this?

"You should have killed him;—killed him," he gasped.

"I did," she whispered, nodding; "I did. I did; and they are hunting me for it. But they'll never take me."

While Cyrus was stirred only by his girl's sufferings, the shame of her daughter's life was what sunk into the mother's heart. It sunk and burned, eating its way deeper and deeper. She was tortured with a vague, indefinable remorse, that put a question. Had she brought up her little girl so poorly that honor had been as nothing? What a bungler she had been. How unobserving and careless.

She said no word. It might have been better if she had; but words now were so meaningless. She simply took the responsibility of the whole affair, making excuses for everyone but herself. There was something fundamentally wrong somewhere; that was certain. It must be with herself; who else was there?

And she began to have an intense hatred of her body. Her gentleness to little Betty was sublime. The mother fancied that in this way she was making some reparation for past failures, past neglects.

Those two things were continually before her. She worked heroically to correct and amend. Hers must be a life of sacrifice and

renunciation from now on. Perhaps in that way she could save them both.

Little Betty lying on her bed, too weak to sit up, would watch her mother, racked with the cruelest grief she had ever known. Brutality she could have endured with stoicism, but this kindness was killing.

Without raising her head her eyes would follow her mother all over the room. Sometimes she would reach out her arms, seizing her mother, and cling to her, crying brokenly: "I am not fit. I don't deserve it. You must not come near me . But don't leave me, Mother, don't. Don't."

Then the mother's head would bow. "You must not say that, Betty. It's my fault, not yours. All my fault, and I'll never leave you, little girl."

It was after a scene like this one day that Kirby arrived. He was just out of prison, released at the end of a year's service by order of the Governor. His sentence had been for life.

He came down in high spirits to get at work again. Anarchy must prevail, and he was the man of all men to assist it. His

name was great among his own kind; the press had sounded his deeds from one end of the country to the other. He had had every move chronicled; every sentence reproduced. His imprisonment had heightened his power. The tragic death of Ida and Reinsdorf assured him a position second to none of the socialistic leaders. The sense of peril in connection with his work apparently did not influence him. He was sincere enough in his ideas to put them before self.

But his coming was fatal to Cyrus. The man now was not only willing but ready to listen. The tirades against the rich soothed him, though he had no enmity against anyone but Fellows.

His feeling towards that man was inhuman. There was nothing he would not have done to him. He could not speak the name, he was so choked with hatred. Some day there would be an end to this thing. Cyrus waited for it; yet knowing that a meeting with Anthony J. Fellows would be disastrous. But he was glad of it. He wanted something fearful.

He watched his daughter and knew that she was dying. Her condition grew weaker every

day. Her fever-burned hands picked and played over the coverlet. She talked incessantly, raving in delirium; going from one subject to another. She went over and over her life with Teddy. It was fight, fight, fight. All at once her voice would change; in the bitterest grief she would cry out for forgiveness, tortured by the shame she had brought on her father and mother. From that she would implore protection, tossing in the throes of pursuit. The police were on her track—she had no where to go. Her troubles left her in a state of collapse.

Yet it was what she had caused her people that distressed her most. She talked to her mother in pitiful, heartbroken tones. Betty's whole body quivered with pain.

Cyrus sobbed, beside himself. It was past all limit. He hovered over the broken wreck of womanhood and saw only his child, his beautiful child, his child and Betty's.

One day a letter came addressed to him; he read it through hastily, his face flaming. It was from a mining agent, asking the price of his mine. Mr. Anthony J. Fellows was seeking to consolidate all the iron-ore mines

into one great company—what was his price? Cyrus uttered a great oath.

"What's up?" asked Kirby; he was beside the bed putting iced-cloths on Betty's head. Betty the demure stopped in her work and turned her tired, haggard face towards her husband.

"He is after that too? He ain't content with all the rest. God damn him."

But what was there to do?—nothing but Fellows' will. If Cyrus refused to sell he knew what would happen. That resistless enemy—MONEY—would begin the hunt; it would squeeze him, starve him, and finally break him. If he sold, what then? What was there left? The old story, starvation, poverty, suffering.

The very thing he had fought to keep off was back at him again through Fellows, always through Fellows. Would that man never cease to trouble him—to hound him? He had brought ruin now for the third time. Was there any right in the course things had taken? Any right in what Fellows was permitted to do? There might be no statute law to stop him; but there was another law—the

law of right—the law of living and letting live. And Cyrus demanded the right to live. He was not always going to be powerless to resist.

Betty's ravings filled the room. "Don't, Teddy. Don't send me out into that. I can't stand it. Even a dog is entitled to something for faithful service. Oh, oh, oh, you hurt me." She was panting and struggling. Her mother took both the burning hands in one of hers and supporting Betty's head with the other, she laid the girl back against the pillows.

Little Betty yielded like a child; she was very weak; but even that exertion tired Betty the demure, she was giving out. In truth, sacrificing her life to her daughter. Anyone could see that it was becoming only a matter of a little time for them both.

Something of this flashed through Cyrus' brain. He seemed to be seeing things all at once with desperate distinctness. His face went white.

"Come," he whispered to Kirby, "I want your help. I am going to kill Anthony Fellows."

CHAPTER XIX.

CYRUS went to work on his plan of murder with the utmost deliberation. He and Kirby had virtually changed places. It was he who arranged and advocated death to the capitalist. It was no longer an evil to kill; it was right. The principle underlying the deed was self-preservation, and in every crisis self-preservation was the first law. A perfectly legitimate thing.

There was not much discussion of means. It would be a bomb, of course. Kirby would make it. It should have a time-fuse and they would place it somewhere about Fellows' house. It depended on the rich man's habits, how and where and when the exploding thing should be put.

By turns Kirby and Warner dogged the house. It was a big square building of stone like an impregnable fortress. A driveway ran from the barn to porte cochere.

By dint of persistent watching the men discovered that Anthony J. Fellows left his house in a carriage at nine o'clock Tuesdays, Wed-

nesdays and Thursdays; the rest of the week he spent out of town, to avoid the heat of summer.

This seemed to furnish the necessary information. It was decided that the bomb should be placed by the driveway just the other side of the porte cochere.

After much discussion they concluded that a fuse-bomb was too uncertain; it might go off too soon or too late. A percussion bomb was the article. The weight of the carriage rolling over it would explode the dynamite. That would make failure practically impossible.

In fact it seemed that with careful manipulation the attempt could not fail.

The percussion bomb caused Kirby some uneasy moments; it was much more difficult of manufacture than a fuse; but it was finally mastered. A rough affair of lead pipe. Kirby begged the privilege of placing it, but Cyrus was immovable; it was his doing. He was dealing out the death for his own wrongs; therefore his alone should be the risk.

Everything was ready on Monday afternoon. Cyrus went home to spend the last

evening and night with his two women. The next morning before dawn he would come to Kirby for the machine. This was to be put in its position while the servants at Fellows' house were asleep.

The two Bettys were entirely ignorant of the scheme. It was Cyrus' wish that they know nothing at all of the affair. Little Betty raved no longer; the activity of her mind was lost. She lay quiet in her bed, picking—always picking—with restless fingers, her eyes stared open. She was pitifully weak. There was no hope for her—absolutely no hope. Death was coming; not boisterously, but like the gentle rising of the tide. There was no use to fight; no use to pray; the shadow was so near no man could stop it.

The mother sat by the bed watching; no expression in her face—no emotion anywhere. The sorrows that she had endured had blunted every sense in her whole make-up. She simply sat moveless, helpless, dumbly waiting; her hands shutting tighter and tighter. Even Cyrus' presence failed to rouse her.

Along towards nine o'clock Kirby came in;

he was fearfuly excited. In his hand he carried a package that he handled with immense caution. He called Cyrus aside.

"You've got to keep this here. Tonight I was followed home. Those bloodhounds are on to the game. They suspect something and are dogging me. Don't come near me in the morning; it wouldn't be safe. I think I'd best get away somewhere for tonight. Be careful of this; you know one drop would blow you all to hell. I don't dare stay here; it might put 'em on your track. Good luck, Cy. Don't get nervous. The bomb is all right."

Cyrus took the bomb gingerly. He was too amazed at what Kirby had said to grasp the situation clearly.

A moment later Kirby had wrung Cyrus' hand and was off,—peering out into the hall before he passed his friend's door to be sure the way was clear. He wouldn't bring his friend under suspicion.

When the leader of anarchy was finally out into the street he was off like a hound, disappearing down an alley, and dodging streets. If anyone was dogging him he'd give them their money's worth. He would not get into

the penitentiary again if he could avoid it. That was straight.

Meanwhile Cyrus, holding the instrument of instantaneous death in one hand, was searching all about the room for a place of safety. He did not like the turn things had taken. Never, never would he have endangered his beloved Betty by housing such a terror as this in the same room with her if he could have helped it. He tiptoed around awkwardly; his face red with anxiety and alarm.

Once he passed near the bed. It was just then that a swift crisis began to manifest itself in the sick woman. Her face turned livid; it seemed impossible for her to breathe; the under jaw fell; she trembled, her hands and feet already cold. Then a rattle came, vibrating in her throat.

The mother heard; at last she was roused to emotion again. Bending over the bed she stared at that dying face through the flickering light of a candle. It was death. Death! No mistake about that; nothing but death could look like this.

There came a shrill, sudden scream of fright

from the lips of the woman Cyrus adored. It pierced his faculties.

"Cyrus! Cyrus! She's dying—our Betty! Oh!—Oh!—"

At Betty's cry Cyrus turned sharply; his mind terribly confused. The move brought him on a line with the bed and the door. Betty the demure was swaying. Her strength had fled and she was frightfully pale. The man divined that almost without seeing, for his rolling eyes were fixed on another figure. A man who stood there before him in the doorway. At first Cyrus stared, bewildered, without understanding. Then with the swiftness of an instinctive protection he remembered.

It was that man! The man who was tracking her! His dying child. His Betty—all because she had killed the son. How in the world had he found them out? How had he come in so silently, standing there in the very room before he had been discovered?

With the vivid sagacity of a trapped beast all Cyrus' senses bounded into acute action. This was his enemy—the enemy that had haunted his house with the persistence of

doom, but was the very man he himself was seeking out. The man whom he was to kill in less than twelve hours.

Cyrus took one step forward. His eyes were gleaming with satisfaction. Through his whole body swept a veritable passion of joy. They were on an equal footing now. The instrument of death was in his hands—his enemy was within his reach—at last—!

With great deliberation Cyrus advanced to within three feet of Anthony J. Fellows. Then he raised his hand,—the hand that held the bomb. In the presence of this tremendous opportunity the man was forgetting everything—Betty's death, his wife's collapse, his own danger—they were all lost sight of under the madness of his desire for revenge.

Suddenly he paused, his hand in the air. Something in the doomed man's eyes was holding Cyrus. Something that was not fear, something that was not born of danger.

In another minute Fellows moved a step nearer to Warner, stretching out a hand. For an instant the fate of both men swung in the balance, then—

"Wait," said Fellows.

And Cyrus, still looking directly into his enemy's eyes, slowly began to lower the bomb.

THE END.

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